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THE MAN OF MARK IN THE CHURCH TOMORROW

HIGHT C. MOORE

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The Man of Mark

IN THE

Church Tomorrow

BY

HIGHT C. MOORE

Editor Biblical Recorder

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TO
THE CHURCHES I SERVED AS PASTOR
MOREHEAD CITY—1890-1893
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MONROE—1894-1898
NEW BERN—1898-1903
CHAPEL HILL—1903-1904
THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED

FOREWORD

The initial chapter in the following pages embodies the substance of an address delivered at the Baptist Young People's Convention of North Carolina in session at Durham, April, 1910. The remaining chapters orginated in the author's pastoral labors and some of them have been repeated on various occasions during his later service as Sunday School secretary and as editor. All were revised and published editorially in the Biblical Recorder at intervals during the summer and autumn of 1911.

These messages, while intended to be he'pful to all who may read them, are primarily designed as a spiritual appeal to intelligent Christian young people. Hence various phases of the developing life in Christ are here presented in more or less logical connection from the soul's emergence out of Philistia to the hastening of the golden age ahead. Beyond doubt, incomparable days are before us and it is of first importance that our young men and young women get right with God and lay themselves with true devotion upon the altar of His service. And if in some slight degree these pages contribute to that holy end, the author will feel that his labor of love has not been in vain in the Lord.

HIGHT C. MOORE.

Raleigh, N. C., April, 1912.

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I

THE MAN OF MARK IN THE CHURCH TOMORROW

Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.—Ecclesiastes 9 : 10

THE MAN OF MARK IN THE CHURCH TOMORROW

The church will be here to-morrow. Cynics may sneer at it; foes may assail it; worldlings may corrupt it; false prophets may pronounce its doom; but it is as true of the church to-day and to-morrow as when Jesus declared among the spurs of Hermon "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." And not only will there be a church of to-morrow, but it will be better than that of to-day. It will not have more truth but a greater apprehension of it; not a broader mission but a better grasp of it; not more grace but more graces. The church of to-morrow, to be worthy of the past and to bring its heritage of ideals unto their fruition, must be more vital, more penetrative, more efficient than to-day; in fact, it will be the flower of the church in all ages, the type and prophecy and forerunner of the Church Triumphant.

And in the church of to-morrow there will be men of mark, the key-persons in the Kingdom, the men and the women who bring things to pass for God and humanity. There were men of mark in Old Testament times like Abraham, Joseph. Moses, Samuel, David, Ezra, and Isaiah. There were men of mark in New Testament times like Peter, Luke, John, Paul, and Timothy. There have been men of mark in the Christian centuries like Chrysostom, Augustine, Calvin, Luther, Wesley, Edwards, and Carey. There are men of mark in the Christian world to-day like A. H. Strong the theologian, W. Robertson Nicoll the journal-

ist, and hundreds of others. And there will be men of mark in the church to-morrow. They may not be sheer individual peaks rising solitary above the level of common humanity; but, rather and better, they will be distinct summits crowning the mountain ranges of elevated mankind. They will not all be preachers or theologians or authors of weighty tomes, but men of affairs, administrators, statesmen, philanthropists—in short, men who translate the truth of God into manly character and then infuse this red-blooded Christianity into the human mass like leaven in the meal working till the whole is leavened.

May I say here that to be a true man of mark in the church is far more desirable than distinction anywhere else? Not one of us will question it. Contrast Moses the Law-giver with Pharoah the pyramid-builder: which looms larger before you? In the light of the centuries which seems to you the greater man—Paul the Apostle fettered in the death-dungeon or Nero the Emperor reveling at that moment on his luxurious throne? Whose name is preferable: Wyclif the Bible translator and martyr, or Voltaire the atheist? Carey the missionary, or Paine the infidel? Surely a good name is better than great riches or honor or power or popularity; and the best of all good names is that rightly won before the altar of the Lord.

But let us remember that to be a man of mark in the church does not apply to that man who by worldly ambition, by truckling and trading, by base political intriguing, has attained prominence in church affairs. No; his reign will be brief, his work will be abhorrent to his brethren as long as

it does last, and his memory will rot when he is gone. On the contrary, to be a man of mark means to have the consuming aspiration and the all-absorbing endeavor to attain in Christ's name and for Christ's glory the highest and widest usefulness possible. Let this central fire glow in any heart, burst into a flame of heavenly zeal and holy action, and the man of mark in the church emerges to conquer the world and glorify God.

I say he will be in evidence in the church to-morrow—the church in which you young people of to-day will move and have your being; and since I hope many of you will measure up to his standard, it becomes worth while to study his traits in order that we may copy them into our lives.

Let us put it down as a thing fundamental and not needing discussion that the man of mark in the church to-morrow will be a genuine Christian, a faithful church member, and a consecrated servant of God and humanity. Building upward from such foundations of character we observe several things worthy of mention.

I.

The Man of Mark in the Church To-morrow Will Be a Man of the Bible.

He will not only believe in the Bible, but he will believe it; he will not only know about the Word of God, but he will know it. The voice of the critics will not shake his faith for he will see and show that their assaults are effective not in destroying the Temple of Truth but merely in brushing off a few icicles hanging from the eaves; and that instead of blasting to pieces the Rock of Ages

they are able barely to scale off a bit of the moss that has grown upon it!

Our man of mark will be a student of the Scriptures. He will not be satisfied to study the Sunday-school lesson—one paragraph a week; nor to simply hear a chapter read at the family altar; nor to read a Psalm as a soporific for conscience before retiring at night. He will study it devotionally, indeed, but with his eyes open; with a sharp, inquisitive mind, bent on getting all possible good out of the reading; and with a library of helps at hand that will throw light on the sacred page.

He will verify or falsify by the standard of the Bible, what he hears from the pulpit or reads in the press. For the air will be full of heresies and here alone can he find a refuge from the storm of isms and ologies which is to arise.

The man of mark must be a man of the Bible, which is honey and the honeycomb for comfort, milk and meat for strength, a lamp for guidance, and the Sword of the Spirit for conquest.

II.

The Man of Mark in the Church To-morrow Will Be a Man of Prayer.

He may not indulge in long prayers; he will hate vain repetitions; he will abhor meaningless platitudes; he will be unsatisfied with printed prayers.

But in the very nature of things he will, he must be, a man of prayer. Only thus can the machinery of his life connect with the Power-house on high. He cannot ascend day by day the throne

of his life without going first and frequently to the Throne of Grace. He must see the face of God in order to see his duty clearly and do it well.

And we look to him to translate for us Paul's word: "Pray without ceasing." Not that he will neglect the place of prayer, the hour of prayer, the home altar of prayer, the individual closet of prayer; but that he will carry the spirit of prayer into his daily round and grind, lifting his eyes heavenward ever and anon through the day, and calling at every turn for the wisdom which is from above.

Moreover, we look to the man of mark in the church to-morrow to restore the family altar. It has fallen into ruins and the decay of the family has, in consequence, set in. Set it up anew, ye men of the future; adapt it to your time, but by all means carry the race back to the altar in the home.

III.

The Man of Mark in the Church To-morrow Will Be a Man of Vision.

His thought will overleap his sky-line and oversweep the world. Not that he will be less interested in the church where his name is registered, but he will be more interested in the universal betterment. He will have a world-vision; he will indeed know of the events at his county-seat and his State capital, but he will also be conversant upon affairs if not actually correspondent with men in Pekin, Tokio, Cape Town, and St. Petersburg. And through these world happenings he will look more deeply, reading the signs of

the times, marking the great movements of providence, and utilizing the opportunities that present themselves for advancing the Kingdom of our Lord. Thus he will see his relation to the world, where the need is, what he can do to meet it, and what he can induce others to do to meet it. He will be a man of vision.

IV.

The Man of Mark in the Church To-morrow Will Be a Man of Sacrifice.

He will be a dollar-maker, but the dollar-mark will not be his trade-mark or coat-of-arms. The world around him may be money-mad, but he will have a clear head and a true heart. Others may endeavor to serve God and Mammon, but He, as our laymen are telling us now, will serve God with Mammon.

To-day we are just learning how and how much to give; you of to-morrow must "go on unto perfection." We have given little; you are to give much. We have given at haphazard; you are to give systematically. Our donations have been too indiscriminate; you are to give specifically and to good purpose. We have been lop-sided in our benevolences; you are to be symmetrical, well proportioned, observing true balance and poise. In fact, you are to be the best illustration thus far in history of the fine art of Christian giving and of human philanthropy.

V.

The Man of Mark in the Church To-morrow Will Be a Man of Concentration.

First of all, he will ascertain what he is fit for in the Kingdom of God. He will not fritter away years

waiting for his duty to be written by the finger of God with pencil of flame across the sky. He will know that there is room in the Kingdom for every personality, that there is something worth while for him to do, and that he can do this thing somewhere and somewhen better than anybody else on earth.

And having found what he can do, what God would have him do, he will center upon it his energies. The word of Solomon will be his motto as it was of Stanley the explorer: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." We of this day are too content with the day of small things, too impatient for results from our feeble efforts, too much like Joash who under the test of Elisha stayed his bow when his quiver was full of arrows. You of to-morrow in your larger plans for good, must specialize in your work and then focalize your powers. And when thus the rays from above are through the lens of your energy brought to a focus upon the hearts of men, the world will be set on fire for God and the right.

VI.

The Man of Mark in the Church To-morrow Will Be a Man of Co-operation.

It is a beautiful thought that the whole of Christianity is embodied in each and every Christian, so important and potential is the individual. At the same time, in Christian work no individual can accomplish alone what he can in company with others. Hence an army in time of war; and hence the church in a hostile world. Thus it is that ten times one is more than ten, and the

organized two can put to flight the scattered ten thousand.

Our boys on the athletic field are teaching us the value of team-work; our business men in their great corporations are applying the same principle; and this same thing appears in the conduct of institutions, of government, and, in fact, of the whole structure of society. Too little of this we have had in our church life. Not that entire federation would ever be practicable or the merging of denominations desirable, but that within denominational lines, certainly, we ought to co-operate far more cordially and effectively than we have ever done. And to this task you of the future will set your hands.

VII.

The Man of Mark in the Church To-morrow Will Be a Man of Independence.

He will not lose his individuality in co-operation; his personality will not be merged into a combination of saints, however saintly. The independence of the individual is necessary to the independence of all.

He will think for himself. There is no virtue in taking our ideas wholesale from others without letting our own minds eddy about them. This is not saying that one should be a stickler over non-essentials, that he should spend his time as a mote-hunter, or that he should devise strange notions on holy themes. But it is certain that the world and the truth need alert, inquiring, and judicious minds to search out what is true and good.

Moreover, he will act for himself. His own

conscience must be his guide, a conscience enlightened by the Bible and directed by the Holy Spirit. He will touch hands with others, but it will be by an act of his own imperial will eager to accomplish the most possible for the betterment of the world.

VIII.

The Man of Mark in the Church To-morrow Will Be a Man of Business.

Too long the church has been a dormitory wherein the man of the office could find repose instead of a field for service. But it is not a Sunday hammock for rest; not a theater for mere entertainment; not a club for the cultivation of the social life; not a screen to shield hypocrisy or a pedestal to win public notice. It is a place of work; and the world's workers, they who are bearing the heat and burden of the day in our multiform life, will find in the church an adequate and congenial field for their highest gifts and their best energies. There is more for the man of the pew to do than to pass and patronize the collection plate; more to do than to buy his ticket, as it were, and take his seat. The kings of finance, the princes of the professions, the queens of society, the foremost of the future, are to lay their splendid powers upon the altar of the Lord and thus make the best possible investment of their talents.

And this means not that you of the future will forsake the mart to lie prostrate perpetually before the altar; but that from its sacred environs you will take out into the swirl and roar and

crash of every-day life the spirit of the sanctuary and the ideals of sainthood. It means the translation of the Decalogue into practical life. It means the interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount by living and vital daily conduct. It means the proclamation of the Word of God by lip and life without effrontery or effeminacy. It means combining the choice of Mary, passive at the feet of her Lord, with the energy of Martha, active in behalf of her Lord. In short, it means the bringing of the race to its highest type and accomplishment in a God-fearing, world-moving man.

IX.

The Man of Mark in the Church To-morrow Will Be a Man of Convictions.

He will have the certainty of knowledge that he is right, the warmth of feeling to cleave to the right, and the strength of will to proclaim and to do the right.

In former times, men believed, knew their beliefs, contended for them, often died in their advocacy. They did not always believe rightly or contend wisely, but in the main, they wrought for the glory of God and left the world better than they found it.

To-day our doctrinal muscles are flabby; we have little relish or appetite for distinctive views; an insipid unionism is smothering denominational loyalty; and the churches have an eye to each others' comfort more than to the Master's Commission. And though beyond doubt the world is growing better, it is equally certain that we are losing immensely through ignorance of essential

Biblical teaching and that a central need to-day is the effective presentation of sound doctrine.

And so we look to the man of mark in the church to-morrow to lead us back to the Bible; or, better, forward to the Bible with all that it contains and with all that it means to our sinful race. We look to him to hate sin with a perfect hatred, to love goodness with a perfect love, to serve God with a well-nigh perfect service. To do so, he must see things clearly, believe ardently, and labor aggressively. In short, he will be a man of convictions.

X.

The Man of Mark in the Church To-morrow Will Be a Man of Influence.

He will exercise an "influence" in the primal and full meaning of the word: a "flowing into" others of his power and virtue and character. It will be influence like that of Elisha outstretched upon the dead boy until he breathed again the breath of life. It will be influence like that of Jesus when His garments' hem was touched and His power tapped by the poor diseased woman. It will be influence which, under God, will call the dead to life and lead the living to life abundant and life eternal.

So our man of mark will impress himself, his truth, his cause upon the men of his time. He will labor for God even more than for gold and lead the world upward. He will carry into the church his business capacity and out of the church his spirituality, being at once a force from the community in the church and from the church into the community. He will be a soul-winner, a

saint-builder, a Kingdom-promoter, a Satan-destroyer, because he will be a man of true and wholesome influence.

Such, in part, as I conceive, will be the traits of the man of mark in the church to-morrow.

Need I say, in conclusion, that the world needs this man; needs him more than it needs mere kings and presidents, financiers and economists, philosophers and statesmen? He alone is the salt of a putrefying earth, the light of a darkened world. To him we must look to lead the race out of its wilderness into a happy and endless Canaan.

The man of mark: the world needs him; and the world wants him. Loud rings to-day the call of the future for men and women who will fear God and keep His commandments.

I beseech you to hear that call to-day. See the sphere of your highest duty. Aspire for the widest usefulness you can attain. Prepare for the great days and the great duties ahead. Purpose in your heart by God's help to leave the world better than you found it. Lay your gifts, your time, your all upon the altar of divine service, whatever be the vocation of your life. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Young people of to-day, ye men and women of days to be: hear, each of you, the call of the present and the future, of the world about you and the Lord over all,—**Be a true man of mark in the church to-morrow!**

II

BACK TO BEERSHEBA

And he went up from thence to Beersheba.—Genesis 26 : 32

BACK TO BEERSHEBA

About fifty miles south of Jerusalem may be seen the ruins of an ancient town. Now, as in olden times, it is in a wilderness; we are told that no shrub or tree adorns the immediate locality, while the surrounding territory is uninviting. Yet there are seven wells of ancient masonry, two of them containing water; so that the herdmen of this southern frontier of Palestine can here find a water-supply for their flocks.

The chief interest in these wilderness ruins lies in their earliest history. Apparently this spot was first occupied and named by Abraham, being in turn the residence of Isaac and Jacob. Some of the most thrilling scenes in their lives were here enacted. Here they seemed nearer to God, more prosperous in business, more happy in their home life than elsewhere in all their wanderings from the head of the Perisian Gulf to the Valley of the Nile. It may therefore be regarded as the chief residential and religious abode of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The second of these patriarchs and his relation to Beersheba comes before us for present consideration. His father and mother sleep in the Cave of Machpelah, and upon his shoulders fall the responsibilities of managing the great properties of Abraham and carrying out the purpose of God. Years of undisturbed and successful residence at Beersheba are finally affected by a distressing famine. The pasture lands are speedily exhausted and other sources of revenue and support are cut off. Isaac must therefore look elsewhere for temporary

residence. Soon arrangements are perfected and he is located in Gerar, a city of Philistia, residence of Abimelech, and situated in the fertile lowlands along the Mediterranean.

His residence in Gerar began most auspiciously, having the favor of the king, the good will of the people, and a fine opportunity for business. That he succeeded admirably was no more than was to be expected. But that he went far beyond his Philistine neighbors, growing excessively rich on their soil, became an occasion for bitter envy, malicious complaint, and final severance of the friendly ties binding Isaac and Abimelech together. So Isaac departs from Gerar, the scene of great prosperity, but without its altar, and wends his way eastward up the valley. Perhaps unwilling to leave such a region with so fine an outlook for wealth, Isaac halted at the wells of Abraham, now filled up by the hostile Philistines. But in this vicinity, too, he was followed by the envious natives, and only by repeated concessions was he able to avert open hostility. In a short time, therefore, we find him pursuing his journey eastward till he comes back to the old home at Beersheba.

And now Isaac secures a blessing unknown to him as a wealth-getter in the city and valley of Gerar. The fact that he stood at "the well of the covenant," and was on the spot of many sacred memories, filled his soul with becoming awe and moral rapture. And the very night of his arrival he is granted a vision of God, communion with and renewed promise from the God of his father, Abraham. It was on the morrow perhaps that he

erected an altar and called on the name of the Lord; the place and the act of worship coming before all things else. And finally the patriarch reestablishes on this sacred spot his home, as indicated in pitching his tent and digging a well. How much better was Beersheba with its covenant, communion, altar and home than Gerar with all its envied wealth?

The change from the one to the other is recorded as a mere historical fact in the brief verse: "And he went up from thence to Beersheba" (Genesis 26:23). But to us, in view of the circumstances, there is much more contained here than history. Isaac at Gerar, away from the patriarchal home, seemingly forgetful of religious duties and thoroughly successful as a fortune-winner, becomes the type of the wandering Christian. Not that the analogy is perfect at all, for Isaac is represented once as divinely directed and again as divinely blessed, while his efforts and sacrifices for peace are most certainly worthy of imitation; yet in its main outlines the descent to and residence in Philistia suggest the Christian straying from duty, while the return to Beersheba, with its consequent blessings, sets forth the coming back of the troubled Christian to the ancient landmarks of spiritual bliss and duty.

Among the Philistines.

It is all too true that many Christians to-day are residing morally in the land of the Philistines. Their ungodly surroundings are regarded lightly, evil is condoned, moral crime is unrebuked. No altar is built to Jehovah. If any sanctuary is at-

tended, it is that of some heathen deity—Bacchus, or Venus, or Mammon, or Moloch. There is a descent to the level of unrighteousness, a degradation of holy profession, a temporary but disastrous obscuring of faith and hope and love. The result is that wicked companions are confirmed in their wickedness, the Christian (if indeed a Christian) is unhappy in his course, and God is dishonored!

Mark, first, **the unfortunate wandering.** It may be that in some respects Beersheba can bear no comparison with Gerar: one hardly more than a mere group of wells in wilderness pastures, while the other was a royal city in the midst of a rich valley. Yet, with the significance attaching to each, it is a sad day for the Christian when he leaves the one for the other. The altar in home and in temple is neglected; the throne of grace is approached more seldom; the searching of the Bible gives way to casual reading, and then perhaps to almost total disuse; the moral tone of character, failing in development, rapidly deteriorates; religious influence is first weakened, then obscured, and finally destroyed. What is the matter? Ah, there is a "famine" in the land! The culture of flocks, the increase of wealth, the betterment of worldly position—these things cover up the weightier matters. The search is made for material advantage; and when such a motive prevails, it is not singular that Philistia should present better inducements than Canaan. So the tent is struck, the paternal wells abandoned, the ancestral burying-place left behind, and the descent is made to the broader pastures in the lowlands. A true picture of the Christian turning his back upon all

that is dearest to him in his spiritual history, and descending from a high level of religious bliss and usefulness to unite with the unrighteous in their eager grasp for the world!

Now, that the Christian is in a spiritual Philistia, let us note what may prove to be **a temporary prosperity.** Not that every one succeeds, by any means; for sometimes failure in his purpose is the scourge which drives him back to the olden spiritual haunts. Thus he finds speedily that the world has more glitter than gold, and he turns back disappointed, disgusted, penitent. But sometimes he gains his purpose temporarily. The Philistines at first smile upon him, give him plenty of room and a fair chance, lend a helping hand and whirl him forward into great prominence. His lands may yield an hundredfold the first year, his flocks show magnificent increase, his treasury become much fuller and his constituency more immense. How he congratulates himself upon the change he has made! The world is really not so defiling as the pious imagine, and the ill-reputed Philistines are not so bad after all! With increasing wealth and widening influence and rising power, surely all is well! But the pious observer misses the altar, the act of worship, and the presence of God from the wanderer's life. The material has overshadowed the spiritual; the growth of one has been at the expense of the other. The wanderer feels it and wishes he had the ability to serve God and Mammon; the good perceive it and lament the sad decline; God beholds it and determines in His own time and way that it shall be completely rectified.

And thus it happens that the saint among the

worldlings is sure, sooner or later, to come upon certain trouble. The once smiling Philistines become evil-eyed and bitter-hearted; at first, bad feeling, then disapproving murmurs, and finally raging criticism. After all, the world does not really care to have Christians descend to its level. There is a feeling among many that a professor of religion is out of place when engaging in things doubtful or vicious; they regard him as a fly in the ointment of their pleasures. And if any do really enjoy the degradation of the Christian, it is only for a time, and while it lasts it acts under satanic stimulus. It is possible that our wanderer may stray so far and sink so low that he may surpass the wicked in their wickedness; he may for awhile out-Herod Herod in the pursuit of special vice. How great indeed the change from Beersheba! But the scourge will certainly fall; and the greater the vicious prosperity, the deeper will be its lashings. Bitter envy, deepening hatred, and malicious hostility at last show themselves. He who descends to worldly ambitions can expect nothing else than to be treated by worldly methods. Friends bound to one by the ties of material advantage cannot be depended on; their flattery may quickly turn into vituperation. And so the saint's welcome to Philistia soon wears out: if he fails, he leaves under their withering scorn; if he succeeds, he is finally driven out by a tempest of hate. And as he goes forth he is followed by annoying hordes that would allow him no peace.

Truly, the land of Phiistia is no fitting abode for the Christian. The motives that lead him thither are unworthy of him and his profession. The

prosperity that comes to him there is one-sided and temporary. And vexations innumerable are sure to overtake and overwhelm him.

Have any of us been through this experience? Are any of us in Philistia to-day? What, then, is open to us as the one course of safety and peace?

Back to Beersheba.

The forsaken haunt must be re-occupied, the old spiritual home re-opened, the former habits of piety re-established. Up the valley of Gerar and out of Philistia, first of all! No man can hope to stay there reaching after its wealth, contending against its citizens, and at the same time enjoy peace of mind and prosperity of soul. So it is either Philistia with its trials or Canaan with its morals. Which shall it be? In our better moments we detest the very motives that bind us to a strange land; we see how cheaply we have bartered our spirituality for things perishable and unsatisfying; and we long for the old-time joy and peace. Out, then, from Philistia and back to Beersheba!

Back to the Place of the Covenant.—Such was the meaning of that wilderness home to Isaac. And in our experiences there has been a spot more sacred than all else because there we came to terms with God. Well you remember it! Bitter was the sorrow for sin, earnest had been the seeking, complete was the surrender of life to God, and perfect was the joy of faith. It may have been in your childhood, years ago, that God met you at your Beersheba and entered into covenant with you that your service of Him should be faithful

and that His blessing of you should be continual. You never will forget it—that sunniest of all spots in your past life! But, alas, you have strayed off into Philistia and the light is dimmer in your soul than it used to be. O, fellow Christian, let us go back to that early experience and renew our covenant with God. He is the same now He was then, the agreement is still binding, our follies and failures will be forgiven, and we shall have the old-time joy we have so often coveted.

Back to Communion With God.—The stay of Isaac in Philistia was marked by no heavenly appearance. The fact is, God will not go with us in our wanderings, though He permits us not beyond the reach of His arm. The Christian in the place and pursuit of vice has no right to expect the unfailing protection of God from the contamination and consequences of his course. It is sadder still when the child of God becomes so absorbed in worldly affairs as to be unmindful of his relation to God. Then his morals are in danger, happiness departs, and peace is overthrown. He misses something out of his life and its place cannot be filled by wealth or fame or pleasure or power. Sickened at last, where shall he turn? Back to the place of communion with God speedily! As in the case of Isaac, the very time of arrival will be marked by the blessing of the divine presence and promise. The throne of grace is still accessible; let us turn thither from our unhappy and too long neglect and find again the joy unspeakable!

Back to the Altar.—The wanderer has allowed the early altar to go down and he has sought no

other in a strange land. We do not wonder that life without its altar of worship soon becomes unbearable to the child of God. He remembers the happiness of the sanctuary with its warm-hearted worshipers, its uplifting services, its impress for good. How often has he gone there with a burden and left it, with a temptation and dissipated it, with a difficulty and solved it? There he was in the Holy of Holies with God, and so the destructive tempter with all worldly seductions either failed of admittance or was utterly trampled underfoot. Ah, those were blessed days around the altar! But that happiness vanished as we strayed away under the spell of worldly charms. And now if we want the joy, we must journey back to Beersheba, rebuild the altar if need be, and bow there in earnest worship. Yea, let us prodigals, one and all, come out of grasping, greedy Gerar and erect altars of worship in our homes and crowd our sanctuaries with ourselves and others who endeavor to worship God in spirit and in truth.

Finally, Back to Permanent Spiritual Residence.—Are we not to profit by our experiences among the Philistines? Shall we get out of trouble only to get in again? Will not a single wandering be sufficient to establish us forever in loyalty to God and His cause? O, beloved, when once we have gotten away from the troublesome Philistines and back again to our spiritual Beersheba, let us abide there contentedly and continually. There we can keep ourselves in the love of God; in patience we can possess our souls; with less distraction we can commune with God; with more joy we can perform

our Christian duties and see with leaping hearts the result of our labors. The Christian who is ever wavering from good to bad, moving back and forth from Canaan to Philistia, is worthless on the one hand and hated on the other. What we want is moral steadiness in purpose and in act. We must seek abiding qualities of heart and soul. Away with that spiritual fickleness which shifts between right and wrong according to senseless whim or hostile pressure! Pitch your tent at Beersheba and there abide so long as it has an altar and God comes down to bless. If the foolish laugh at your choice, let them laugh. They may call it a wilderness; tell them it blossoms as the rose. They may scorn you as a rustic; let them know that the companionship of God is more satisfying than the pleasures or applause of men. Whatever the attitude of your fellows, you cannot afford to descend from the heights of piety and grovel with the unregenerate mass in the lowlands of carnality.

Then let us catch and heed the urgent demand in our theme: Up and away from the land of Philistia! Back again, and finally, to sacred Beersheba!

III

I WOULD DO GOOD

When I would do good, evil is present with me.—Romans 7: 21

I WOULD DO GOOD

The Christian embodies in himself two seemingly contradictory facts: he is both a saint and a sinner. Paul addressed the members of the primitive churches as "saints"; witness the opening verses of his letters to Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome. Time and again believers are styled "children of God," thus being admitted to the holy family; they are also called "joint-heirs with Christ" and thus are entitled to the holiest privileges of eternity. To further emphasize this sainthood of believers John declares, "Whosoever is born of God sinneth not." Verily, the Christian is a saint or he is not a Christian. But he is also and at the same time a sinner. The wisest man of the world said truly: "There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not." The man after God's own heart sang: "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." The beloved disciple not only says in regard to the past, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us," but also with reference to the present he declares: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." So while the sinner may be a saint, the saint is still a sinner. Saintliness and sinfulness,paradoxical as it may seem, are manifest in every Christian. We may safely say these two traits cannot be completely separated during our earthly existence. And it is just here that we have shown us the sphere and the necessity for the processes of sanctification, the progressive culture of the good in us and the elimination of the evil from us. Also,

it is just here that we have the true solution of the sinning of saints, how it is and why it is that a good man sometimes goes astray.

"When I would do good, evil is present with me." This is the language not of one unsaved but of a man truly regenerate; not of a babe in Christ, but of one who has had a wide experience and has come to the full stature of a stalwart Christian manhood; it was written by the foremost minister and missionary of Christ; it is the utterance of a man not a whit behind the chiefest of the apostles. Such is the man who identifies himself with tempted and sinning saints, and in these words he voices a tenet of universal Christian experience.

The message of Paul in these words may be centered about three points: First, the holy aspirations to do what is good and only what is good; second, the present evil which would weaken that aspiration, make it of no effect, and turn the current of life downward; and third, the life-long struggle between the saintliness of our souls and the sinfulness of our flesh, the outcome of which will be the triumph of the good over the evil.

I.—The Holy Aspiration.

Let us, first of all, define the Apostle's aspiration which in his case, as in ours, lies at the very base of conduct. In a short simple Saxon sentence is borne to us the throb of the engine which produced such marvelous results in his life: "I would do good." What a kingly word is "good"! It is lifted out of and above comparatives and superlatives; for one man may do better than another and yet not do good, and the best that any man

can do is short of absolute good. Yea, here is a very snow-flake out of heaven, the whitest feather of an angel's wing. To do good is to do nothing but good. Who measures up to this ideal? Some honey we may store, but how often we use the painful sting; some good things we may write upon the page of life, but never a page unobscured by many a blot and stain! To do good is a higher aspiration than the desire to go to heaven: a man may have the last and yet as a spiritual miser, grasping after glory and yet hugging his sins, sink into hell; while he who aspires and endeavors to do good is the true lover of man, the real imitator of Christ, the only inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven. Clear away all misconceptions, set this aim in its true light, and we have no truer, no higher, aspiration.

But observe that such an aspiration is derived. If the natural man does any deed that is good, it is not for the sake of God, not for the sake of the good, not for the sake of man, but around self as a center. No unredeemed man can clear himself from this charge and from this condition. No man can have this aspiration unless he surrenders his soul to God and becomes regenerate through divine grace. In other words, one must be good in order to do good. The stream of a good life can only come from the fountain of a good character. Man frequently attempts the work of reform down the stream; but it is at the fountain that the essential and saving work is wrought, and it is wrought by God. Here the bent of nature is changed so that doing good, instead of being incidental to self-interest, becomes the main business

of life. This uplift of aim and of action, we say, is not human but divine.

We are prepared, then, to see that this holy aspiration is distinguishing: it is one great thing that marks the believer as distinct from the unbeliever. This distinctive mark is not public profession of faith, for some profess who do not possess and some possess who do not profess. It is not the external act of conversion, for some are like the silent dews of the night while others are like the shock of earthquake. It is not even conduct, for between the deeds of regenerate and unregenerate there may be the slightest observable difference, and sometimes we might point to an unbelieving man as more exemplary than his believing neighbor. Not these things mark the believer invariably, finally; but we find it largely in his aspiration to do good. He desires ardently to do only that which is right; he rejoices when he does it; he sorrows with breaking heart when he fails to do it. Then, it is not that he always does good, but that he would do so. His desire and his effort in this direction are so manifest that even his unsaved neighbors say his failings are due to his weakness, to the pressure of temptations, to lack of light or opportunity; they know that his heart is right and that he does in his soul want to do right always and everywhere. Some of them may do better in some respects than he does, but all of them fall below him in aspiration—in the love of good, in the desire and in the effort to do good. And herein we note that which distinguishes him from his neighbors.

Moreover, like every other far-reaching aspira-

tion, this is unattained; as we rise upon its wings we see yet higher altitudes above us. We are never completely satisfied with what we do because it comes short of what we see might be done. We are not quite content with what we are because it is short of what we might be. And so there is such a thing as noble restlessness; it comes not from being dissatisfied but from being unsatisfied. The man who is satisfied below his best and the man who is dissatisfied over his lot are both missing the true path of life; but he who, yearning upward, unsatisfied with his past and present strives onward and struggles toward this ideal—he lives even here a fragment of the life eternal, among the everlasting foot-hills now with some conception of higher slopes but after awhile enraptured among the blissful summits of the everlasting mountains. Attainments here are but partial and imperfect. And so the Christian would rather be judged by his aspirations than by his achievements. Whatever he has done, he has wished and tried to do better, and his aspirations impel him to something higher in the days to come. On the contrary, we suppose most men unsaved, certainly in the realm of morals, would prefer to be judged by their achievements than by their aspirations. This is partly because of pride in what has been done and partly because their aims and motives have been unworthy. But the Christian seeks to attain the unattainable; he hungers for a righteousness he can never have fully here, but this hunger will lead him on to complete satiety in the world to come.

We need not speak of the stimulus of such an

aspiration. Kindle this fire in the center of any soul, and the life cannot be a failure: it will send forth heat into the cold and light into the darkness. Character and conduct may be crooked, imperfect; but he is in the right way who attempts to square himself by the rule of perfection. And so this loftiest of human aspirations will lead us to being and doing our best. For him who in his heart declares, "I would do good," there are no greater worlds to conquer than that which thus lies out before him. Oh, that such an aspiration were able to swing forward in its high mission without restraint! To what heaven would it not bear us in sublime ecstasy?

But listen to the words of the sacred penman: "When I would do good, evil is present with me."

II.—The Present Evil.

Not only is evil abroad in the world; it also invades the precincts of every Christian being. The sphere of the evil of which the Apostle speaks is himself, his mind and his body. The presence of evil in us is due, we think, to two things: undeveloped spirituality and indwelling sin. That which has been divinely implanted within us has not come to maturity; consequently its power of resistance to hostile forces is not great. And the inherent iniquity of our natures may be driven out of the citadel of our being but it is still in possession of some of the outworks. The soul is surrendered to God but the flesh mantling it has not been rescued from the dominion of sin. In short, there are two men in one, just as in the land of Canaan dwelt the undeveloped Hebrew na-

tion and the unexterminated Canaanites. Bunyan's "Holy War" is true to Christian experience. From the ramparts of the flesh the missiles of the evil one are hurled against the battlements of the soul. And thus we see wherein lies the capacity of man for sinning. Paul acknowledged that he did the evil he "would not do," and he charged it to the sin dwelling within him. It is because we are not completely cleansed in body and soul that sin finds entrance into the Christian life.

Of course the channel of the present evil is ever-present temptation. The tempter often sports with his devotees, but in dead earnest he plies his arts upon those who dispute his sovereignty. Day and night his snares are set for them. And he assails them not only when they follow "afar off," but he draws near to deceive, if possible, the very elect. Witness his work among the children of Israel, chosen of God, first recipients of the olden Bible, embodying some of the fairest names of history. See him invade the apostolic circle, ensnare its honored treasurer, bind him with the fetters of Mammon, and hurl him through the black portal of suicide into the Tophet of eternity. Behold his subtle strategy in the early churches—scattering some with persecution, rending some with discord, poisoning some with heresy, suffocating some with prosperity. And to-day there is never a Bible reading but that he is there to snatch away the good seed, never a petition from the closet of prayer but that he is there to distract the mind, never a sanctuary service undisturbed by his presence and effort to chill devotion, never a pulpit without constant exposure to the allure-

ments and the assaults of the prince of this world. Truly may the apostle speak of evil as "the present evil."

Well would it be for the Christian, if we in speaking of the evil present with him could say merely that he had through the agency of the flesh a capacity for sinning and that he was constantly subject to temptation. But Scripture and experience bid us to take a step yet farther. Sadly we grant that the present evil too often accomplishes its purpose. There is a temporary yielding to sin even by the best of men. It was after he had led Israel out of Egypt, communed with God in the mountain till his face beamed with heavenly radiance, and formulated a code of laws for his nation and for all future civilization that Moses the man of God sinned and thereby forfeited entrance into Canaan. It was the man who had been called to the apostleship, recognized as the leader of that circle, and admitted to special intimacy with his Master who with bitter oaths denied his Lord with a triple intensity; mark you, this was after three years with Jesus, but later still and after the descent of the Spirit he was guilty of an inconsistency which was withstood by the faithful Paul. Yes, the best of men and those of largest opportunity yield at times to the pressure or the persuasion of evil. Thus they forsake their first love and grow lukewarm. They seek an easier way than the direct path of duty and soon they tread the domains of Giant Despair and land in Doubting Castle. They backslide for a time into ruts of unhappiness and narrowing usefulness. The cause of Christ suffers; the cohorts of error

rejoice. Oh, how baneful are the results when the present evil gains its end—when the flesh obscures the soul! What is to be done, and where is our path of duty?

III.—The Life-long Struggle.

The present evil is present to assail. The holy aspiration, then, must struggle in its defence and for its development. Our bodies therefore become battlefields. Incessant war rages within. The good is arraigned against the bad and it is a conflict to the death.

Mark the power of sin. In the natural man it is absolutely over-mastering and all-powerful. Its victim is a fettered slave crouching under its lash or bounding forward at its behest. Sin bids him turn a deaf ear to the pleadings of the Holy Spirit, and he does it, though the end thereof be death. Sin commands him to stifle the faithful voice of conscience, to trample this monitor under foot, and he does it, thus putting out the light which God has kindled in his bosom. In his better moments he makes good resolutions, but sin disapproves and so he acts like Jehoiakim who cut the roll of Jeremiah to pieces and defiantly cast it into the fire before him. Ever and anon he lifts his eyes from earth and longs for the future glory of heaven, but sin blinds his vision, bids him delay his preparation, re-shackles his soul, and haughtily demands a more loyal service. The great chieftan of sin is Satan, adversary of God, outcast of heaven, arch-enemy of the human race. His prime ministers are such demons as Greed, Lust, and Ambition. His agencies are thick in the world about us—shining gold, exquisite pleas-

ure, alluring fame. And chief of all at his disposal is the flesh, significantly the anagram of self since it, instead of God, becomes the center of the life. Here sin does its ruinous work, using the flesh as a leverage against the soul and transforming the carnal mind into enmity against God.

Against this power which still has some foothold in even the most saintly we must raise incessant and life-long war. The moment God enters the soul, the battle waxes fiercer and the enemy is more alert. Let us side with our better part and help it against the present evil. Then when wrong is done and the life is stained, it is chargeable not to us but to Satan in us. Paul himself, shrinking from his sinfulness and horrified at his wrongdoing, cries out: "It is not I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." Mark you, he is not excusing himself for being overswept by evil; but he is a dual man and, hating the self that sins, he wishes to be identified with that higher and holier self which is born of God. This better self must not be degraded, brought down to the level of the baser self; on the contrary, it must be defended from evil and developed in good and have self cleansed as nearly as possible from its defiling iniquities. So here is the battle-line, here the arena of struggle. Stand, therefore, by your nobler impulses; fight back and down the baser elements of your nature; Paul-like, keep the body under, though it must be beaten blue; let the spiritual in you, divinely implanted, cultivated and controlled, ascend to its rightful throne and dominate your life.

Need there be any doubt as to the outcome of

this struggle? You already have prophecy of it in the victories you are winning even here. Oh, how delightful is the feeling of conquest over this baser self! How the exultant spirit rises from the arena of triumph and soars on steady wing into the upper air! You who have known what it is to yield and to feel the filthiness of resultant guilt and weakness know also what this victory means. You know that in the fierceness of the struggle you cried out for help and a strong Hand was extended you; the unforsaking Lord was at your side. Yea, though sin was dwelling in your flesh, Christ reigns in your souls. You have placed yourself in His charge and He who never has lost a battle will help you in the conflict that is on. And so more and more you are routing the evil in you and cultivating the good. But one day—it will not be long—death will come and the clay that has been so fertile for the seeds of wrong will be consigned to the primal dust. And another and brighter day shall dawn on the morrow, the glad resurrection morn, when your body shall emerge from the grave, at last cleansed from all sin, incorruptible, fit habitation for the redeemed soul and fit instrument of praise in the New Jerusalem. Victory at last, and victory forever! Truly, "we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us and gave Himself for us."

Here, then, is our view of the sinning of a saint: **He sins.** Scripture, observation and experience declare it unmistakably. But it is the eddy in the stream; the main current of life rolls onward to the glory of God. **He detests sin.** He knows its deceitfulness and its deadliness, and though it be

interwoven with his heart-fibres, yet he detests sin. His very body under its influence he shrinks from as "this body of death," as if it were a dead and decaying body bound to his living self. **He battles with sin.** The war may be constant, but he will fight it out. The enemy may be his own flesh, but there shall be no compromise. Destructive sin must itself be destroyed, or downward soul will be dragged with the body into hell. One day **the Christian will win,** as surely as God is in His heaven and as certain as His hand is upon the helm of the universe.

As a final word, we cannot refrain from urging the unsaved to welcome the indwelling Christ and thus to rout indwelling sin. Though sin still dwell in your flesh, let Christ reign supreme in your soul. Adopt as yours the great aspiration of Paul: "I would do good." Under its charm and stimulus you can encounter and overcome the ever-present evil. With Christ in you and this star of aspiration above you, happy will be your life and heaven will be your home.

IV

PRESENT YOUR BODIES

I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.—Romans 12 : 1

Long before it was written, Paul was aware of the truth embodied in the old couplet:

Doctrine without duty is a tree without fruits:
Duty without doctrine is a tree without roots.

In common, therefore, with most of the Pauline epistles the letter to the Romans most happily combines an exposition of Christian teaching with an exhortation to Christian conduct. The doctrinal element predominates in the first eleven chapters; the practical element pervades the remainder of the epistle.

At the beginning of this second portion stand two verses wherein the apostle announces the basis of right living. He takes, as it were, a text for what he has to say afterward; so that all the duties of the Christian, individual, social, civic, which are urged in the chapters following, can be traced back to this base. The entire consecration to God of the individual, body as well as soul, affords a divine leverage for the enforcing of every duty and contains the assurance of an upright life in all relations.

And so we have urged upon us the great duty of presenting our bodies to God; the duty rests back upon powerful incentive to its performance and looks forward to successful application of its principles.

The Incentive.

We are so constituted that we work only when drawn or driven. Energy is the product of incentive. We go forward attracted as by a magnet

ahead or impelled as by a goad behind. All the time somewhere there must be incentive. This is no less true of the life spiritual than of the life material. So the Apostle before defining the special duty in mind declares that which would urge his readers to any duty whatsoever.

The first element of the incentive is personal. The writer would bring all his personality, his influence, and experience to bear. He was well-known by reputation and highly esteemed among the Romans; and he would use this influence for their good. Whatever power he had over them or could summon, he would use for their upbuilding under God. He calls them "brethren," and so urges them on by the ties of a common experience and fraternal sympathy. And into his plea he throws the pleading, persuasive earnestness of his soul: "I beseech you brethren." Moreover, he was a man who was himself doing what he was pleading with them to do. So the marvelous power of a matchless example of devotion to God and duty was a part of this personal element in the incentive. All that the Apostle was or could be in character, in conduct, in influence, he was willing and anxious to use for urging his fellow-men to their duty.

The second element of the incentive is doctrinal. It is bound up in a single word: "therefore." Through this word as a window we look back over the preceding eleven chapters of sublime doctrine. All that has been previously said is brought to a practical point here: the doctrine of justification by faith is inspiring but it inspires to good purpose. It is thus that weary duties are

performed faithfully and effectively. Sound doctrine is not only a stimulus to mind and inward morality, but also it stirs to the noblest deeds and the highest living. In fact, can there be any true living apart from a ground work of accepted teaching and principles whether formulated or not? Government rests upon it; the industries rest upon it; character rests upon it; yea, Christianity rests upon it. Who can know any one of the great doctrines of the Bible with any degree of thoroughness and not be impelled to nobler being and doing? Who can glean from the field of Scripture teaching without gathering strength of soul and stimulus of life? It is no wonder, then, that Paul in urging to duty urges in view of doctrine.

The third element in the incentive is divine. In the mind of the writer it seems to be the main one. He did not make the personal element prominent; he pressed the doctrinal more for what it was in itself than because of his presentation of it. But now he underscores, as it were, this divine element. He places the Benefactor before the beneficiary and exhorts the receiver to honor the Giver. "By the mercies of God." What power there is in kindness and in love! Is there anywhere a stronger incentive to action? Not merely, perhaps not primarily, the love felt for another but the consciousness of that other's strong and unwavering love. Love which we feel will carry us to any length of sacrifice in the performance of duties that are agreeable. But love which is felt for us, if we are fully conscious of it and reciprocate it, will carry us to any length

of sacrifice in the performance of duties that are disagreeable. Our love, alone, will indeed lead us to do but to do according to our own ideas; another's love, requited, will lead us also to do but according to the will of that other. Hence of the two, love active and love passive, the latter furnishes the subtler impulsion and insures the nobler life. Just this is supplied in the divine economy and noted here. God loves us with a broader, more constant, richer love than ever dwelt in human hearts. His mercies are strewn upon us thick as the sunbeams of a clear noonday. Ages before we were born the stream of mercy set in toward us. The days to come are painted in rosy hues on the background of divine loving-kindness. God is the giver of every material good. And He gives these blessings not because He must, not because He ought, but because He wills; and He wills because He loves. Moreover, the mercies of God are not only earth-wide, but they are also heaven-high. Who can measure the love of the Father who gave His Son, and of the Son who gave His life a ransom for many? Think of a love that could give us the Bible, the Christ, the Holy Spirit; a love justifying, sanctifying, adopting; a love that saves from blackest sin and saves unto the highest heaven! Who can contemplate such a love and feel that it is for even him without reciprocating it from his very soul and consecrating to its behests his every life? If the love of God, greatest of all loves, as expressed and made tangible in His mercies, greatest and most abundant of all expressions of love, —if this will not move one, there is no attraction

to draw him, no force to compel him, to a holy life.

But surely the incentive, if considered for a moment, is strong enough to lead to any duty. The plea and the example of the good and the great about us; the stimulus of the holy truth revealed in the Word of God; and, above all, the mercies of God coming close and constantly into our lives at every point. To these the Apostle calls attention; and surely they embody stimulus sufficient for the performance of any duty.

Having thus defined the incentive, the Apostle proceeds to declare and press home the great duty.

The Duty.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

So the great duty is really given in a single word: **sacrifice.** A close examination of the thought in the mind of the writer reveals the fact that the duty consists not so much in making a sacrifice as in being a sacrifice. Familiar from of old was the making of sacrifices prophetical of the great Sacrifice at Golgotha; but after the Lamb of God was slain on Calvary we, like Him, are to be sacrifices. Synonomous therefore in this case with "sacrifice" is "victim," and the original is so rendered by some scholars. Being a victim is surely far more than making a victim of something or somebody else, whether it be the riches of the treasury or the fat of the flock or the fruit of the land. Being a victim surely in-

cludes all other sacrifices one could possibly make. And being a victim brings us more directly into imitation of and fellowship with Christ than anything else.

This sacrifice is voluntary. There is an appeal on the part of the Apostle and in behalf of God to the will of the believer. And the duty is one in which the believer, given light as to his course and power to walk in it, must take the initiative. The altar is ready; the fires are already burning upon it; the way is open to it; there is abundant incentive to arise and go to it and fling one's self upon it; but there is absolutely no compulsion. If this command is ever obeyed, it must be a free act on the part of him who obeys it. If man ever becomes a living victim on the altar of divine service, it will be because he presents himself to God for that purpose. If the citadel of the human will be stormed and taken, there will be no trouble in getting mastery of the entire situation. But this conquest must be complete; our will brought into absolute subjection to the divine will, and this act a free and full and unconditional surrender.

Again, the sacrifice is physical. It is presumed now that the will is subject to God, is absorbed into the divine will and does not raise war against the rulings of an all-wise Providence. This consecration of heart craves an outlet, seeks a channel of expression. And where shall it be found? Why, through the consecration of the body, the earthly garment of the soul. The light within must shine so brilliantly and so constantly that it will send its rays through the veil of the flesh into

the darkness of the world around. Hence the exhortation: "present your bodies." Our consecration is in no sense complete until our bodies are consecrated to God. You may say you give your house to a man but so long as you reserve the deed to the land on which it rests your gift is not absolute; the house in fact and in law remains with the land. We may profess to have surrendered our souls to God but if our bodies are withheld, the surrender is far from complete. Moreover, the physical man supplies the instruments of consecration: the feet that are swift on errands of mercy; the hands that are full of good deeds; the tongue that always blesses; the eyes that are alert for opportunities of well-doing and well-being; the ears that are deaf to evil but attentive to good; the countenance that is a benediction; the mind that dwells on noble thoughts and contrives ennobling deeds; the heart that overflows with love to God and man; the whole being devoted to good and so devoted to God. In what other sphere can the consecrated soul exert itself but through the body? How else can the good, divinely implanted in our souls, reach the needy, sinful world around us? If the body be consecrated, it becomes the fit and capable medium for the usefulness of the consecrated soul. Hard, indeed, it may be and is to keep the body thus in a state of devotion; but if in obedience to this command we present our bodies, God will fill even them with His Spirit and we shall the more readily be able to conquer the evil in us. The surrendered body becomes the temple of the Holy Ghost; what a world of privilege lies in this glorious fact! Who

then would withhold his body from the divine altar?

And while the body is to be the victim, mark you, it is to be a living sacrifice. Notice the contrast between the altars of the old and the altar of the new dispensation: upon the old there were death and blood and burning flesh; but upon the new there is life. He who sacrificed before Christ stood beside his altar; he who sacrifices after Christ casts himself with joy upon his altar. And so the altar is transformed from the scene of sacrificial death to the arena of sacrificial life. It has been beautifully said that "Jesus by His death swept the altar of its dead victims." So to-day the altar is not stone but service; the sacrifice is the living self; the fire is consuming zeal. Sometimes, indeed, we are to serve by dying but mainly we are to serve by living. Our sacrifice, then, is more the giving of life than the giving up of life. And while we may feel that this is the more delightful duty, is it not really the more difficult accomplishment? Yet with its delights and its difficulties, the duty is clear: sacrifice the living physical personality to God.

Again, the sacrifice is holy. Not the "wholly" that means entirely, though that is necessary and is elsewhere brought out; but the "holy" that means perfect. Surely this epithet cannot be applied to the body itself, though it mantle the saintlest soul on earth. Rather does it imply that the act of the body's consecration is holy; and then that the body, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, is to be devoted to holy employments. Formerly

it was under the sway of Satan and in the service of sin; now it is at the disposal of Christ and subject to His perfect will. And as this mandate is heeded, the body approaches more and more nearly itself to the standard of holiness while this physical consecration reacts favorably upon the consecration of soul. As the Levitical victims became ceremonially pure before being laid upon the altar, so our lives should be daily and hourly cleansed for their true consecration to God.

Such a sacrifice is acceptable to God. Do we desire to please God, to please Him at whatever cost? Here is a deed that pleases Him more than anything else because it includes everything else He would have us do. By the offering of our lives and by this alone can we send up to God "a sweet-smelling savor." Our souls are made acceptable and saved by grace through faith in Christ; but our lives are made acceptable and saved by good works through consecration to Christ. As the smoke rose to heaven from Abel's altar, so the sacrificed life, body as well as soul, is to-day and always pleasing to God. Jesus said the Father seeks—not only welcomes but goes forth in search of—true worshippers; and the same doubtless may be said as to true workers. There is no spectacle upon earth—in the arts, the sciences, government, industry, human civilization and achievement—nothing so acceptable before God as a thoroughly consecrated life—a life in every part and to every power, even the lowest and remotest, given entirely to God, for time and for eternity. To do this very thing ought, then, to be the one aspiration of our souls, the one endeavor of our lives.

Once more, this sacrifice is reasonable. The Christian life is not irrational; no Christian duty is unreasonable. The sacrifice required is not clouded with the mystery and superstition which confound the heathen; for upon our altar the clear white light shines from the very throne of God. The sacrifice of ourselves is not like that of the animal victims who though by the altar of God knew not the purpose of their slaughter; for we know what we are doing and why we are doing it. To this sacrifice we are impelled not only by the clearest and highest reason, but by all reason. It is the logical thing to do in view of God's mercies. He gives us life, sustains it, blesses it, fructifies it; and here He points out the way to larger life. Whatever we are, or can be, is due to Him; then surely it is the reasonable thing for us to conform to His purpose in our lives. To do otherwise is to be guilty of the embezzlement of divine funds and to merit sentence to the everlasting Prison. But to lose life in service and thus upon God's altar is to find our true life both here and hereafter.

The Application.

Now that the spirit of consecration is to dominate the entire being even to the enlisting of our physical powers for God, the question arises, In what way shall these consecrated powers be applied? To sum up the response in a word: Be sure of your model. Two are before us:

Reject, then, the worldly model. "Be not conformed to this world." Your life was once in conformity to worldly principles but now as a Chris-

tian you are to turn your back upon those principles. They are selfish and no true life can exist with self as a center. They are sinful and no healthy symmetrical life is possible with sin as an eating cancer upon it. They are satanic and there can be no permanently happy and useful life when the evil one is regulating it. The spirit and rules and practices which are of the earth earthy are not the proper furniture of the Christian soul. Beyond doubt the world will pose for us in many attitudes, but, however alluring they may be, we must not make them our model: the business man who wins fortune by fraud, the political trickster who ascends to fame by deceit, the society belle who seeks pleasure at the expense of modesty if not of virtue. From such models turn away as from the edge of an awful declivity! "Be not fashioned after this world."

But adopt the divine model. What, then, and how is this? Not an external attitude such as the world assumes, but a principle of life divinely implanted within us. "Be ye transformed"; be divinely metamorphosed. Such is the change which really brings us before our model. And this is defined as the will of God. Not long ago the burning query flashed over Christendom, "What would Jesus do?" And another one followed, fainter but perhaps truer, "What would Jesus have me be and do?" So in planning our deeds and our lives it is better to inquire what God would have us do than to inquire what man has done or would do. Not the worldly fashion but the divine will is to be our rule. Prove it as we will, test it as we may, experience it as we have

opportunity, we shall always find it to be good for us, acceptable to us, and perfect before us. And while at times we may find it hard by reason of our imperfection to copy it, yet it is possible and pleasurable and profitable when in earnest we undertake it. "The renewing of our minds" is necessary; by the mind we discern, but since sin has impaired its powers it must be renewed, cleansed, clarified in order that the divine model may be correctly copied. So we have our model in the will of God, and the life that is consecrated to God must be fashioned not after the world, but after His own righteous and holy will.

And now if we have followed the thought of Paul with profit, we have learned at least three great life-duties and lessons:

(1) Surrender your soul to the keeping of God. Hear Him say, "Son, give me thine heart." You may have done this years ago; but do it over again now and taste afresh the fount of joy. Or, possibly, you have neglected this first-of-all duties. Attend to it now. God will welcome you for the sake of His Son; He will give you peace and life everlasting.

(2) Place your body on the altar of God. You cannot give God your soul and then keep the body for worldly pleasures. Nay! Have you let the body in which the Holy Ghost is willing to dwell become rather the temple of pride, selfishness, passion, sin? Beloved, God wants that body of yours with its various faculties and capacities laid upon His altar of service. Will you give it to Him truly, freely, fully this day? Let Him have it henceforth, and though disease and death and de-

cay may do their worst upon it He will give it back to you one day and it will be incorruptible and immortal.

(3) Work according to the will of God. Not merely a passive submission to the will of God in apparently adverse providences, but in particular the finding out of what God's will is and then the bending of our energies toward the carrying out of that will. What a glorious privilege that we must not walk or work in the dark, but have that luminous will to guide us! Let no man fly in the face of that will; let no one ignore it. But let every one carefully discern it and diligently heed it and thus through a glad and good life here he will walk into the larger life, the life eternal.

V

PUT ON THE ARMOR

Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.—Ephesians 6 : 11

PUT ON THE ARMOR

War, merciless in the destruction of men and means, is yet an inspiring theme. The fallen hero is always sent by admiring friends to the soldiers' paradise. The survivor is never without hearers who list with bated breath as the butchery and bloodshed of battle are depicted. The best known pages of history are those reddened by the blood of millions. The tales of ancient courage and mediæval chivalry and modern fortitude, exhibited on a thousand ensanguined fields, are thrilling as tales of romance and stranger than fiction. The poet writes in star-dust the glories of embattled hosts. The orator is never more passionate and powerful than when he paints the deeds of heroes or discusses the prospects of war. In the whole range of human knowledge and experience, there are few themes that have so inspired universal attention and gleamed on history's page or wrought in poet's brain or flashed from orator's tongue.

* * *

But there is another war of deeper interest and wider significance than mortal combat. It is the great conflict between truth and error, between right and wrong, between Christ and Satan.

It is a universal war. Neither the tenderness of youth nor the infirmities of age exempt from service. The soft hand of the maiden lays hold of the Sword and the reticence of womanhood is superseded by the aggressiveness of the warrior. And not only is this martial spirit in every

stratum of humanity within our horizon; it also extends over and throughout the world. Spiritual war is war universal.

It follows that neutrality is unknown and impossible. There are but two sides—the right and the wrong; and we must take the one or the other. There are but two chieftains—the prince of darkness and the Prince of peace; under the banner of one we must enlist or exist. There is no middle ground to occupy. Since all are active participants there can be no disinterested observers. In this universal conflict he who fails to enlist for the right is counted for the wrong. There is no such thing as neutrality.

Again, this war proceeds without intermission. Inconceivable in material conflict, this is yet a marked trait of spiritual warfare. It is so in the individual life from the time the tempter encounters conscience in the young heart until the aged form, virtuous or vicious, sinks down into its final resting place. It is so in the life of the church from its founding in blood to the winning of its last victory at the dawn of the Millenium. It is so in the world-life from the spoiling of Eden by Satan till the ultimate fettering of evil with all its adherents in the eternal Prison House. War ceaseless; conflict unending!

Moreover, there can be no arbitration. The two sides are as distinct as Italian noonday and Egyptian darkness. No compromise is possible and reconciliation can never be effected. It reminds of the old Scandinavian belt duels wherein the contestants were bound together, armed with long sharp knives, and permitted without inter-

ference to slash each other till one or both had been slain. So the war spiritual is a war to the death. All intelligent beings in the entire universe are engaged on one side or the other, and hence there can be no board of arbitration to conclude a treaty of peace.

Strange as it may seem, this universal war is without conscripts. We must indeed fight, but we are at liberty to choose our side and our leader. Satan cannot and Christ will not force men into His service. Jesus says: "I stand at the door and knock"; but the occupant must open willingly or Christ will not enter. He says, "Follow me"; but he drags no one at His chariot wheels. He says, "Take my yoke upon you"; but no unwilling neck is compelled to bear it. He resorts to persuasion and not to force. He wants and will have only volunteers to fight His battles and further His cause. No conscripts in Immanuel's army, and only volunteers in the army of Satan.

Once more: this universal war does not admit the principle of substitution. As all are enlisted, each one must fill his own place and be accountable for his own conduct. The pious father cannot take the place of the prodigal son; if the boy strays, it is his own body that must feed upon the husks and lie among the swine. The goodness and the virtues of a friend cannot be placed to our credit. We cannot buy character with gold or a heritage of good deeds with shining silver. Each one must take his own place in the ranks and so he can neither get a substitute for himself nor act the substitute for others.

Let it be said also that in this war the army of

Immanuel possesses the right of conquest. Satan is a usurper, the despoiler of an Eden and the blighter of a world, and his followers are either blindly deluded or openly traitorous. It is the purpose of the Christ to wrest the entire globe from the hands of Satan. And so the army of the living God is to go forth on one grand series of conquests. It is to search every sea, capture every continent, and bring every inch of the world back to God. It is commissioned to crush every legion of error, to demolish every fortress of wrong, to thwart every purpose of Satan. And the church militant, though emaciated on many hard won fields, rejoices that victories here are a faint prophecy of the glories of the church triumphant.

Surely there is no more important warfare than that which is waging over the town of Mansoul. It has been said that the Battle of Quebec was the most important ever fought in North America because it decided two things: first, that the language of the continent should be English and not French; secondly, that its religion should be Protestantism and not Roman Catholicism. A decisive battle, indeed! Yet a greater is the conflict spiritual. For it deals not alone with a continent but with the universe; it stops not with language, but touches life; it concerns more than creedal statements and reaches the citadel of living faith; it affects time but also moves forward into the remotest eternities. Incomparable war in its cause, its principles, its combatants, and its outcome! Who can contemplate it without a surge of pulse or a stir of soul?

And now since we are in this war and it is fraught with such tremendous results, it is of prime interest that we consider the rival claims upon us and that we decide wisely where our lot shall be cast. Let the opposing leaders stand before us and let us this day choose between them!

Behold the Prince Diabolus! He is powerful. The fiends and fallen angels are his devoted adherents, ever ready to hear his commands and to do his bidding. The world has become his armory. The desires of the flesh are weapons in his hands. Evil companions are the arrows from his quiver. The sparkling glass, glittering gold, shining fame, and exquisite pleasure are used to carry out and on the purposes of Satan.

And then, he is experienced. For six thousand years he has been troubling and tempting the race. He knows the customs and tastes of all nations. He has dealt with all temperaments and is acquainted with every strand of human nature. Princes and paupers have alike fallen into his clutches. His snares have caught the cultured and the illiterate. Age and youth, rich and poor, prominent and obscure, male and female, cannibal and Christian—people of all centuries and countries and conditions,—all are numbered among his acquaintance. His experience is as old as man and as wide as the world.

Moreover, he is artful. Strategy has been known to accomplish far more in military tactics than whole legions of trained fighting men. Who can deny that in this art Satan has attained an alarming proficiency? He is a foe who is well posted in all kinds of diabolical trick and artifice.

His plans and schemes have been in successful operation for centuries. Refined and adapted to the last degree, his artful snares and wily deceptions have won their thousands while the bare facts could not have captured their tens. "The wiles of the devil" have won for him the countless adherents embracing his cause.

Again, he is deadly. Not one of his subjects can declare him a beneficent master. He goes up and down the world, not to bless and build up, but as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. If the race is ever elevated, it will be in spite of his wishes and efforts. He fathers no good work but glories in the ruin of man. Through sin he effects physical emaciation and either dwarfs or warps the mental powers. Yea, more; he lays that deadly hand upon the spirit just fluttering into life, would keep it away from God, and thus consign it to death—the spiritual death here and the second death hereafter. Show one being he has called into true life or up to higher life or on to eternal life! There is no response; there can be none. Death is shrined in his inmost purpose and death follows everywhere in his wake.

Such, and far more, is the Evil One whose power overcomes, whose experience effectualizes, whose arts ensnare, whose deadliness destroys.

But on the other hand, observe the Prince Immanuel. First of all, He is the very embodiment of wisdom. No army can hope for success with an insane man at the head; and many of the greatest generals have made mistakes resulting disastrously in the loss of life and liberty. Yet

here is a leader of infinite knowledge and inerrant skill. He knows his soldiers—their character and condition, their perils and poverty, their trials and temptations, their sins and sorrows, their hardships and helplessness. He knows the strength of the enemy and is prepared to meet him. He detects the subtlest strategy of a sharp and malicious foe, and no trick of the wily serpent is hid from His penetrating vigilance. Besides, He can locate His legions where their energies will have the most telling effect. No faithful soldier has ever doubted the military prowess and prudence of the Captain of his salvation. Immanuel has infinite wisdom.

A second trait is love. Some chieftans have not cared for the lives of their men beyond the accomplishment of their designs. Petty purposes and shallow schemes have been deliberately carried out at a sacrifice of many regiments of faithful soldiers. The devotees of war often have hearts no less severe and stern than that of the god at whose shrine they bow. How different is the princely Son of David! No one has greater sympathy for the race than He who wept with the sisters at Bethany. Boundless is His love for man even in rebellion. His great heart throbbed with the tenderest emotions and brought Him from the heights of glory to the dust of humility to save a guilty yet helpless world. He gave His life a ransom for many and shed His blood for the redemption of the race. In love for man He descended to the dreaded sepulcher, there conquered death in his stronghold, and later ascended on high to prepare a home for the faithful

who fight His battles and carry out His orders. Perfect, infinite, incomprehensible love!

Mark also His success. Great generals have not escaped their reverses. The darkest nights of defeat have sometimes followed close upon the sunniest days of victory. From the dizzy heights of military glory there has often been a wild and awful plunge into the dread abyss of military woe and ruin. And so the war chieftan, now victor and now vanquished, pursues an uncertain path through "alternate shade and sunshine." Christ alone has never lost a single battle. In the wilderness with all the odds against Him and assailed alone and by the mightiest of all His foes, He fought valiantly and came off conqueror. Satanic hosts exulted at the gloom of Gethsemane, the mock trial, the fearful scourging, and the awful crucifixion on Calvary. But their apparent victory was only the harbinger of their everlasting defeat, for on the sacrifice made at the Place of a Skull depended the permanent and effective organization of Immanuel's army. Never have His banners been smitten into the dust and in the radiant yet-to-be they shall wave in glory over a redeemed planet, echoing with His praises and whirling onward in the light of millenial day.

Here,then, are the two and only leaders in the war engaging us all. Under whose banners are we serving? Where do we stand to-day? Let us examine ourselves and our situation, and choose this day whom we will serve.

* * *

In the name of Immanuel we beseech you to

"put on the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." There is fighting to be done and we need armor. Mind you, however, our weapons are spiritual, not carnal; so the armor we need is the armor of God. And if we are ever clad in it, we must put it on; God provides it, places it at our disposal, presses its value, is pleased when we use it, but He does not force it upon us and no soldier wears it against his own will. You observe also that the whole armor is to be used; no part of it is superfluous. Our conflicts are both defensive and offensive, and we shall have abundant occasion for every piece of the armor offered us. And when we have put on the whole armor of God we are to stand—the attitude of vigilance that we may resist the wiles of the devil, and the attitude of readiness that we may instantly obey the orders of our Commander.

And so the Christian warrior stands forth panoplied in heavenly armor. The girdle of truth binds on the armor and imparts strength to the veteran. The breast-plate of righteousness covers the vitals and serves as a bulwark behind which the heart is sheltered from the missiles of the foe. On the march he will encounter a rough and thorny way, and so his feet are sandaled with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. The shield of faith is indispensable; without it he would be at the mercy of the foe, but with it he is able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. The helmet of salvation secures the head and in the hour of apparent defeat blesses with hopfeul assurance of final victory. The Sword of the

Spirit is needed in every conflict and its powerful thrusts are always effective in driving Satan from the field. And within the warrior's breast is the spirit of prayer, the medium of communication with his Commander and the source of his inspiration as he fronts the battle of life.

It is beautifully suggestive that our spiritual weapons are enumerated in the imagery of ancient warfare. For us, as for the Roman soldier, there is room and demand for a brave individuality, whether in defence of the homeland or in aggression on the far frontier. The armor is close-fitting, affects every part of us, and is as vitally related to our well-being as to our welfare. True to our experiences, it is adapted to fighting at close range: many of our conflicts are hand-to-hand, yea, many of them are fought out on the battlefield of our own being. Observe also that the armor is confined to the front; we are equipped for aggressive warfare, but the back is unsheltered and must never be turned in cowering retreat before the foe. And the weapons of the soul are no less tried and true than those which brought honor to the Imperial City, made the Mediterranean a Roman lake, and elevated the nation to the dignity of a world-empire. Unarmed, we must surrender to the arch-enemy of our souls; but in the armor of God we can here win the victories both of resistance and of conquest, dim forecasts of the final glorious triumph in the unending hereafter.

* * *

Then, Christian soldier, gird on the armor afresh and rush into the thickest of the fight.

Fiercely the battle is raging and your services are in demand. Never was there greater need of martial wisdom and holy fortitude than at the present time. Watch the wily foe of your true and highest interests, and plunge thy trusty sword into his vitals. Be ever loyal to your Commander and obey His orders at every hazard and at all times. Contend for the truth with ceaseless vigilance and win souls for Immanuel from the grasp of the enemy. Be faithful unto and in spite of death, and then—the crown of life, of righteousnes, of glory.

But we must not close without sounding the call for volunteers. In the providence of their Leader, the soldiers of the cross are rising from the battlefields of earth to the battlements of heaven. Recruits are needed; who will take the places of those summoned higher? Come ye and fill up the ranks of right. Yet be assured that you need the right more than the right needs you. How weak, defiled, rebellious is man at the best! And yet no disabilities need debar us from joining the army that is sure to win. Only surrender your heart to Christ, our Commander, enroll yourself among His soldiers, and consecrate your life to His service. He will receive you and use you and save you. For to you comes this call and command: "Put on the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

VI

TAKE NO THOUGHT

Take no thought.—Matthew 6 : 25, 31, 34

TAKE NO THOUGHT

Of all the messages of the Bible none are more important than those conveyed in the words of Christ. And of all the words of Christ none are more familiar than the Sermon on the Mount, the Inaugural Address by the King on the Messianic Kingdom. And while every part of that peerless sermon is emphatic, there is probably not a truth unfolded or a duty enjoined that is more important in its practical bearings than that which furnishes our present theme. Thrice it is given, illustrated and enforced.

In the consideration of this command as it is worded in our common version three inquiries may be raised: What is its meaning? Why was it given? How can we obey it?

What is the Meaning of This Command?

"Take no thought"! Does it mean that people are to be unthinking and thoughtless? Most assuredly nothing could have been farther from the mind of our Lord. Our mental faculties are given us for exercise; we are to perceive, reflect, act. The thoughtlessness of the ancient Jews occasioned one of the saddest of prophetic complaints: "My people doth not consider." And in the days of Christ the first and one of the hardest tasks with the disciples was to bring their minds up to the consideration of the highest truth and to make them thoughtful in their attitude to it. Let no one, then, on the basis of this passage, make a virtue of thoughtlessness.

Does it condemn foresight? Does it check the

man of business in the midst of his plans, the student in laying out his course of study, the mother as she looks onward to the development of her children? Nay; the Bible nowhere enjoins a reckless neglect of the future. On the contrary, our eyes and energies are directed toward the future, like the husbandman toiling toward the harvest, or the runner pressing toward the prize or the warrior battling onward to victory. Far, then, from shutting us up to the present or the past, this command really gives us a firmer possession of and a clearer outlook upon the future than we could otherwise obtain.

Nor are these words of the Master to be interpreted as encouraging idleness or discouraging providence. Diligence in right business is our chief way of serving the Lord. The provident ant is our model, not the thoughtless butterfly. Prudence there should always be which will foresee the evil either to evade it or provide against it. And so the idler cannot take refuge in this text nor is there shelter here for the improvident. It is the teaching of the Bible that we are to work in the living present and also to work in view of the days to come.

What, then, is the meaning of Christ in these words? Simply this: The word "thought" as current at the time our version was made, was an equivalent to anxiety, solicitude. In that sense it was used by the translators here. So the command of the Lord is—Be not troubled, worried, distracted, over-anxious about worldly things. True therefore to the original and to the present meaning of words, the Revisers have it: "Be not

anxious." Thus the command is intended as the antidote for anxiety.

You will notice in this connection some of the things which excite worry and distraction. They are only specimen pages from the book of human solicitude, but they well illustrate the entire volume. There is food daily partaken of and necessary to our support, raiment constantly worn and essential to comfort, and the future into which we are always entering. Who of us has not been worried over these very things? The nature of the food, its quality, its cooking, its serving, its effect; each item, over and over again, an occasion of worry. And raiment—not what it was represented, too large or too small, ill-fitting, becomes soiled and wrinkled and torn and moth-eaten and musty; worry in getting, worry in using, worry in throwing aside! The future also becomes an armcry of nightmare: the health of to-day is not appreciated because sickness may come to-morrow; present plenty is overshadowed by the possibility of future poverty; the friends that smile upon us now we shudder to think will soon be gone, cold in death or colder in indifference; the brightest of the days is gone and only the twilight remains. And thus at the dictate of the demon of Worry we label with skull and cross-bones the perfumes of life equally with its poison.

"These things ought not so to be." And that they might not be, these words were uttered and have been transmitted to us. And so we may proceed to recall the reasons resting beneath and around this repeated command.

Why Was This Command Given?

The paragraph surrounding it is really a little sermon upon it; a sermon within a sermon. Several reasons are given why we should rid ourselves of anxiety and rise to an altitude of freedom from care.

Worry is unworthy. The main occasions of anxiety are the trifles of life, not its great and substantial verities. The life is more than the food sustaining it, yet about which do we have most concern in general? The life is hardly thought of while food in comparison is the absorbing topic. The body is infinitely more valuable than the raiment making it comely and comfortable; yet, as tailor and milliner can testify, the main gospel of many is the gospel of good clothes. Sad is it to see people more interested in hat and hair than in brain and thought, caring more for cakes and ices than for the development of life, aspiring rather to physical grace than to elevating influence! The things that occasion our worry are not worth the kind and the amount of attention we so often give them.

Worry is unnecessary. Behold the fowls of the air! Where are the fields they cultivate? With what instruments do they reap and into what barns do they store? Yet mark their cheerful flight in the balmy air and hear their twittering melodies in our forests! Why their apparent freedom from care? "Your Heavenly Father feedeth them," and not one falls to the ground without His notice. And if, as some one has said, He feeds the birds, surely He will not starve His babes. "Are ye not much better

than they?" Worry is needless; why then should we worry?

Worry is unavailing. Can it be said that anxiety has ever accomplished anything beneficial? If a man is dissatisfied with his physique, no amount of worry can add a cubit to his stature. If he is concerned with the brevity of life, all the worry of all his powers for all his days would not add an inch to his career. Whatever harm worry does, it certainly does no good. It brings in no salutary returns; it isn't worth our while. And so as sensible beings we ought to guard against it.

Worry is unsuccessful. Suppose a man who is always troubled over his affairs attains what the world calls success, what then? Simply this: His success came in spite of his worry; he could have achieved more if he had not been thus hindered. But the point emphasized by Christ is not only that distraction is defeating to its very desires, but also that whatever it may attain is not comparable to what is attained without it. To the Jewish mind the brightest possible glory of earth was centered in the person and court of Solomon. But the radiance of that splendid court was not without the rust of corroding care. Go yonder to the fields; consider the lilies, unfolding their peerless petals, untoiling and untroubled. "Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." The trusting, transient flowers out-dazzle earthly splendor; then why should we be anxious about material magnificence when the best we can attain is not to be compared with the budding flowers of glorious spring-time? In both aspiration and achievement anxiety is unsuccessful.

Worry is unbelieving. The mantle of divine providence is thrown over the entire world. It shields not only the great oak, monarch of the forest, but also the sprig of grass, a tiny shred of the earth's carpet. And if in His infinite watch-care God is so vigilant of these least things, will He be unmindful of man whom He has made the crown and glory of His creation? If He clothes with the beauty of the lily the vegetation of the field which to-day blooms and to-morrow burns, shall He not much more clothe us who are made in His likeness? Let us fit ourselves into divine conditions, fulfil the divine purpose in us, and then—trust God. Yet are we not to-day entitled to the same designation used by our Lord: "O ye of little faith"? If our faith were strong, we would not worry. When we do our best, we ought to be satisfied; and if we have not done our best, no amount of anxiety can correct the deed that is done or undone. And when we allow ourselves to be thus entangled and troubled, it evidences to that extent our unbelief in God.

Worry is unbecoming. The over-anxious Christian is too much like the greedy heathen. If he seeks with the same fervor and by the same methods the same things the great unbelieving world is after, where, in the eyes of the world, is the difference between them? The Christian professes to stand upon a higher level, to have a truer wealth, to aspire to nobler things; yet he descends from the pedestal of divine providence and grovels and struggles and battles and worries in the common mire! It is no wonder that men below the Christian horizon worry; their all is

around them and if they lose there is nothing to fall back upon. But for a child of God to descend from his eminence of privilege which affords him the best there is in this life and entitles him to the larger life to come, for such an one it is inconsistent and unbecoming to plunge headlong into the sea of earthly anxieties and solicitude. Your Father who controls the forces of Nature, the affairs of nations, the tides of fortune, He knows your need of the things of earth and He places them where honest labor can win them in sufficiency. What cause is there, then, to be tormented by unbecoming solicitude?

Worry is unrelieving. The load of life is never for a moment nor in anyway lightened by anxiety. On the contrary, the burden becomes heavier; heavier because of the wear and tear of anxiety, but also because it borrows from others and from the future. Each day has enough of duty and privilege to occupy our full powers, but anxiety diminishes our capacity for work by adding to-morrow's troubles to those of to-day. And while we are to bear one another's burdens, we are not to borrow them. Each life has its own burden and strength is given to bear it. But we cannot bear all the burdens of all the world and we need not rack ourselves with the responsibility. Our own duty, our duty to-day—to these let us bring and devote our full powers; and remember that anxiety brings no relief. Work without worry; work and wait.

Upon the background of these truths we see abundant reason for the giving of this command. And we are equally impressed with the desirabil-

ity of freedom from care. The burning practical application, then, lies in the conquest of care.

How Are We to Heed This Command?

There are three very simple directions which, if we faithfully and constantly follow, will enable us to overcome this sinful anxiety.

First, let trouble alone. There is a quaint little proverb, familiar from our childhood, which conveys a wholesome truth: "Never trouble trouble till trouble troubles you." Have you not noticed that those who are most troubled are the troublers of trouble? A mastiff may not be vicious, but if aroused, he will certainly bark and probably bite. Let the animal alone; there will be enough to do when he comes forth of his own will against us.

Let trouble alone: don't hunt for it. And yet there are mighty hunters for occasions of worry. In cavernous hills and thickety swamps, in buzzing days and ghosty nights, they are always searching for something to worry over. With microscope they magnify the little and with telescope they bring near the distant, and so the whole atmosphere swarms with perplexing cares. Oh, how much unhappiness and havoc is wrought by these hunters of difficulty!

Let trouble alone: don't imagine it. Many a life is haunted by the ghosts of anxiety. The ghosts seldom materialize; yet they transform that life into one long nightmare. Many of our vexations are only imaginary. And this faculty attains after awhile a marvelous facility and fertility. Years ago a Western neighborhood was excited for days over the report that a graveyard by

one of its churches was haunted; passers-by in the night had seen something white waving above the graves. At last, a brave-hearted man determined to investigate. He went one night and sure enough there was the mysterious white object moving to and fro. Wilder beat his pulse, but his judgment led him toward it. Almost breathless, he reached forth his hand, not knowing but that it would pass right through the thin air; but he found it—a stalk of mullein moved by the breeze! Ah, how often we are frightened out of our way not by real sheeted ghosts dancing upon their graves, but by mullein stalks unnoticed in the light and breakable by the hand of a child!

Let trouble alone: don't borrow it. As with money, so with trouble, there are more borrowers than lenders. And a like principle applies to both: it is best to keep out of debt. We apply for loans mainly at the Bank of the future. Thus we spoil to-day and the day to be. We are all the time crossing bridges before we get to them and encountering mountains when we are yet among the foot-hills. How much the average man needs to learn: "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof!'

Again, exercise a trusting faith in God. Our faith is put to little use when we allow the tide of trouble to overwhelm us. For this very reason we are connected with the everlasting Throne by the cable of belief. You remember the words of the German poet:

"Have faith where'er thy bark is driven—
In calm's disport, in tempest's mirth;
Know this! God rules the hosts of heaven,
The inhabitants of earth."

Trust Him, then, for He is near. Each and all of the days to the end of the age He is with each and all His followers. If with Daniel we are cast into lions' dens, no real harm will come to us there. If we are thrown into the fiery furnace of affliction, there will be with us One who is the Son of Man. If our bark is tossed by sudden storm, the Master is yet aboard with us and He can calm the furious winds and waves. Oh, let us not worry over the trials of life, for our Lord is near.

Trust Him also, for He guides. When He is my pilot, I dishonor Him if I am agitated because of the shoals and the rocks. If His hand be upon the helm of life, the desired though distant haven is sure to be reached. Moreover, His relation to the individual is but typical of His relation to the whole creation. In and over all He guides and rules; and He is our Father. Then why worry?

Trust Him for He loves us and will always provide. Not a day nor an hour nor a moment do or can we move beyond the sweep of His loving kindness and tender mercy. He provides for us every material blessing, but above all, through riches of grace, He crowns us with life eternal in the many mansions above. Oh, let us put our feet upon the Rock of Ages; then why need be so concerned about the shifting sand of earth?

Finally, put God and His work foremost. Is it possible that we could be induced or consent to do otherwise? Yet this is precisely what is being done by those who are over-anxious about worldly things. We permit a house here to eclipse the mansions hereafter; we show more concern about raiment which moths can eat than we do over the white robes of present character and future

glory; we are more anxious that our names shall be inscribed in the musty registers of worldly eminence than that they should be written in the Lamb's Book of Life. How foolish and sinful we are! "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness!" First in point of time and first in point of position. If we are not Christians, here is the very first thing to be done: before another lesson is learned or another meal is taken or another task is performed, "Seek first the Kingdom!"

As Christians, then, we should always put the interests of the Heavenly Kingdom foremost. Does your work interfere with this program? Adapt it or abandon it. Are your pleasures in the way? Sanctify them or sacrifice them. What occupies the highest seat in your faculties and being? Put God higher; enthrone Him in your soul and life. This is the highest secret of true happiness, usefulness, and success. On this platform there is no room for sinful anxiety. If our whole being be dominated by holiest purpose and aflame with heavenly zeal, we can trample upon the perplexities and worries of life. We are right with ourselves and the world only when we are right with God and His Kingdom.

Take, then, these words of the Master and ponder them well. It is too much to hope that you can learn it in one brief hour; such a lesson becomes a part of us only through the long processes of discipline. Worries will come with the coming years, but strength will be given to overcome them. Use the strength; vanquish the worry; enjoy the days wrested from care; and devote your undivided faculties to the glory of God.

VII

REDEEMING THE TIME

See, then, that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.—Ephesians 5 : 15, 16

REDEEMING THE TIME

The words of Paul imply, first of all, the value of time. It is not a little noticeable that God measures out time to us with a less lavish hand than probably anything else. An abundant and varied animal and vegetable life around us; infinite stores of knowledge in the books of nature and of men; vast oceans and plains and mountains; the spacious atmosphere enveloping us and the immeasurable heavens above us: these and countless other things show that Jehovah extends to man a bountiful and loving hand. Yet when time is given us, how much is granted? Our three-score and ten in one solid lump? Nay, verily. As much then as a year or month or week or day? Not even these; not so much as an hour or a minute! Only the tiniest speck is given us at once; time is allotted by briefest moments. Back of us an eternity unbegun and ahead of us an eternity unending, and yet we are given a bare needle-point of the immediate present upon which to stand. How valuable, then, must time be in the esteem of Him who gives it!

And though these moments succeed each other until they accumulate into years and decades, how little after all is given to any one! It is so precious that the mean tide of human life does not rise to as much as thirty-five years. Our cemeteries have more short graves than long ones; there are more flowers in the spring than fruit in the autumn. And when we come to the time of "the sere and yellow leaf," we look back but a span to the days when the edge of color

first appeared in the opening bud of youth. As we look back, how quickly the long years of even Methusaleh were swallowed up in the vortex of the past. A single verse tells the biography of nearly a thousand years, and half we know of the oldest man is told in the terse formula: "and he died." So short is time at the longest. How precious, then, it ought to be in the esteem of him who possesses it!

The value of time is also accented by the fact that we know not beforehand whether we are to have much or little of it in the aggregate. The date of its closing is uncertain: "thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." We have no assurance that we are to live for many years; no assurance, for that matter, that we are to outlive the light of this holy day. Death will come one day and may come any day, and so every day bears the stamp of possible finality. With such a characteristic does not the day seem more important and of greater value?

And, then, it is not really our own property. Even the little that is given us at once we cannot call ours in any real sense. It is not ours or we could hold on to it and lay it aside for future use. It is not ours that we can do with it just as we please. Our fragment of time is but a piece of God's great eternity. And our fragment is given us in the minutest fragments first because we are able to handle no more, and secondly, because God expects us to use it for His glory. The preciousness of time is, therefore, seen in the fact that while we are entrusted with it particle by particle, even these are not our own.

Moreover, time is valuable because it brings opportunity as its unfailing associate. Some days are larger with opportunity than others; or at least, we so regard them. But every day brings its freightage of golden privilege; not one is barren of prospect in this regard. The bright day and the dark day, each brings its own duties and none are to be overlooked. Many heroic deeds are set in a frame-work of storm and fire. But as truly are there heroes who daily walk the unadorned yet beaten paths of common drudgery. No man and no moment without opportunity; and only by seizing the moment can the man grasp the opportunity. Then as certain of the poets has said:

"Moments seize
Heaven's on their wings; a moment you may wish
When worlds want wealth to buy."

Again, lost time is irrecoverable. The dissipated hour can never be returned; the squandered day is never again presented; the frittered year is gone forever. Drop overboard the pearl of the present moment; your ship halts not for you to recover it nor passes that way again. Wealth inherited or earned may be wasted through idleness, dissipation, mismanagement, or misfortune; yet by industry and prudence one may win back more than was lost. A robust and vigorous health, weakened by exposure and imprudence, may be regained by careful regard for its laws. A fair reputation, stained with misdeed for perhaps years, may in large measure be restored by an unvarying and persevering course of well-doing. But lost time—who can restore it? Lost once, gone forever!

But valuable as time is in itself it may become in the hands of the diligent more and more valuable. The right use of time for a series of years will make minutes accomplish more than days used to do. A boy who can win only five cents an hour may after awhile win as many dollars in the same length of time. By mental discipline the man can compose a book as quickly and far more readily than the youth wrote a society essay. Thus valued time becomes more valuable as we use it without abusing it. In view of all these things, who can fail to be impressed with the preeminent value of time?

Yet in spite of this impression, time is recklessly squandered. Men hold their money more firmly than their minutes. Many innocent looking mortals are criminals against time: the infantile second is thrown out to neglect, the manly day is stabbed to the heart, the dying year is an object of scorn. In the midst of this pillage and murder, Paul sounds a clear, strong note of duty: Redeem the time! Let this not be confounded with regretting the time; for one may be sorry for his past mistakes or tearful if not rebellious over his past misfortunes without redeeming the time. Two gardens entering on a vigorous life were checked by the blighting frost; one gardener immediately replanted, the other fretted for days at the frost; and so the first garden came to its final fruitage before the other. Which of the two gardeners came nearer the course of wisdom —he that wrought or he that regretted? Again, as we have seen, redeeming the time is not regaining lost time, for that is gone never to return;

and yet many in seeking to detain the parting guest fail to welcome the coming guest; thus a genuine hospitality is accorded to neither. To desire a future better than the past is laudable, but one may have it without heeding the command of Paul; for desire unless it become deed is of little value. So the theater of obedience to this mandate is not the dead past, not the unborn future, but the living, manly, privileged present. Redeeming the time implies and demands the right and fullest use of the present moment.

Several things may be included in this duty. The central idea, however, seems to be that of husbanding the opportunities of the passing moments as the merchant utilizes his opportunities for winning a fortune or as the bee seizes upon the flower for the gathering of honey. And these opportunities are twofold—in fact, each opportunity is twofold: first, being good, second, doing good. One phase may seem to predominate at certain times, but both are inseparable and they react upon each other. And if we thus bring every moment to contribute to our well-being or well-doing, we shall perform this important duty. The hours will then be rescued from idleness which murders time in cold blood; from vanity, which murders time by suffocating pleasures; from distraction, which murders time drowning it with care; from excessive devotion to business, which murders time by overdriving its powers. Let not a day fall into the hands of these bandits of time; keep it from their clutches; use it for your good. From the wrong and for the right **redeem the time!**

But how is this best to be done?

"Walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." Observe the word employed to express our using of the time as it passes: Not **standing still**, for that would signify inactivity; not **running**, for that might imply over-activity and we could not hold out always; but **walking**, an evidence of life, a deliberate act, the exercise of power, a speed that can be held, a worthy destination ahead, a means of advance toward it, a thing for all to do. If a man walks, he must go; the Christian cannot idly stand unless he stands in the way of sinners. Walking is not taking just one step and then stopping; so redeeming the time is not making one hour valuable and leaving all the rest to disuse and neglect. The walker has a purpose or destination in view; he who uses the time aright must be dominated by a high purpose in each day allotted him. As walking is a universal accomplishment, so the right use of time is within reach of all.

But mere walking, mere activity, is not in itself sufficient for the performance of the great duty enjoined. The walk must be strict. The Apostle enjoins not only the **what** but the **how**. Walking may be irregular, ungraceful, purposeless, of little value; so we in a spiritual sense and in the use of our time are to walk circumspectly, accurately, exactly. And how are we to do this? Certainly there is no better model than the great antediluvian who "walked with God." Thus our lives are brought into association and connection with the divine life: we follow Him who left us an example that we should follow in His steps; we find

in Him the holiest companionship and the mightiest incentive; we are vitally united to Him in the work here and in the glories of the hereafter. And so we can walk circumspectly only when we walk with God.

This implies that our powers are under control and that life is regulated by righteous rules. Not that one should be bound hand and foot by a set of man-made, self-imposed, inflexible regulations; for these would fetter life unbearably. But on the other hand, there is no greatness attainable without strict adherence to broad, wise, fundamental principles. Nearly every man of note is able to enunciate a few great maxims which lie at the base of his success. Then we should say the circumspect walk is the having of a well-planned life. We cannot do everything, but we can do something; and to that something we should bring not only our energy, but also our wisdom—our energy under direction of our wisdom. And not only should we have a life plan and purpose, but let this express itself in the planning for each day. We seldom do what we do not definitely plan. And so let the morning light bring home the query, What shall I do to-day in line with the purpose God has in my life? And when the day is done, in the gathering shadows let this query rise, Have I done what I planned this morning or adapted the plan to the exigencies of the day so as to do even more than I thought? You remember the poet says:

"Count that day lost whose low descending sun
Views from thy hand no worthy action done."

How many days slip into the past without bearing

the memory of a really good deed, and mainly because we have not purposed in our hearts to make the most of the fleeting hours in accordance with some worthy plan. The morning assignment and the evening examination will help us walk circumspectly.

The walk which redeems the time is not only strict but wise as well. Walk strictly, but do this "not as fools, but as wise." We suppose the Apostle means that we can be unwisely strict. For one thing, as already intimated, we can be so strict with ourselves that life is not free but fettered. For another, we can be so strict as to be or certainly seem egotistical in regard to our integrity—a "holier-than-thou" impression, a "goody-goody" life which repels rather than recommends. And again strictness may easily border upon or merge into intolerance both in faith and practice. So while the walk must be strict, accurate, circumspect, and these first of all, yet it must be wise; it must be accurate as related to the individual himself and it must be wise as related to his fellow-men. It is, therefore, free from occasions of stumbling. The walk with God is a walk before men, and it must not and does not toss into the way of others stones of offence. Such a life, far from incurring the animosity, ridicule, jest, or indifference of the public, wins "a good report from them that are without." Men may not do right themselves but they recognize and remark when one does right in the right way. And such a Christian walk is not only unstumbling, unoffending, but edifying as well. It warns and invites the way-

ward; it stimulates and strengthens the upright. The life of Stephen was so pure that while his adversaries felt themselves above him in argument they knew him to be above them in life. They might carry the people against his teaching but they stood powerless in their assault upon his blameless life. Wisely and circumspectly was he walking and though a martyr's death stood in his path, he swerved not from it. And if in this walk we find ourselves doubtful as to what course to pursue, we are assured that the Source and Giver of wisdom will, for the asking, grant us liberally from the infinite store.

Once more: redeeming the time after this manner does not come as a matter of course. It is the result of attentiveness, strict and persevering. It is worthy of much thought, of our main thought, of the highest thinking we can do. Right here we succeed or fail for time and eternity; here we do our lasting work or achieve our lasting ignominy. Think, then, on these things. Dwell on the past only to learn its lessons which will help to avoid future evils and perform future duties. If any flower garden of pleasure would turn you aside from the exact walk in duty's ways, repel its seductive fragrance, be not enamored of its transient beauties; keep right on, for your face is set toward the fadeless Eden of boundless and perpetual pleasure. Let nothing deter or destroy this greatest work and purpose in life. And not only must we think how and what to do and deny ourselves of whatever is in the way, but in the way thus cleared we are to exert special energy. Ought we not to

work for ourselves only in working for God? Are not our positions in the home, in society, in business, in professional life, in government—are not these merely the tools for the accomplishment of our real work? Keep the tool in order but spend not more time on it than on the work for which it is designed. Some one has said: "Few work on the highest subjects at full pressure." Precious time and the entrusted talent to utilize it are too often wasted upon trifles or squandered outright as bank-notes thrown into the fire. Most of our work is done in a sphere reaching no higher than our heads, and so the secret of true living is never learned. "Walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise."

Notice, finally, the apostolic reason for insisting upon obedience. "Redeem the time," he says, "because the days are evil." The idea, then, is not so much that the days are few, for life consists more in deeds than years; not so much because the days are uncertain, for he who completes life as he goes will be ready for the end when it comes; not so much that the days are unreturning for the present employs all our energies without the past doubling back upon us. But "because the days are evil"; not evil in themselves: each moment is a snow-flake from out the heaven of God's mercy and if it loses its luster, it is because we heedlessly trample it in the mud. Evil in this sense: we live in a world of sin, so the days come and with them seductions to sin; we live in a world of trials, and so with the days come the tides of misfortune; we live in a world of conflict and often the days are darkened by

the smoke of spiritual battle. Such are the evils that crowd into our days and would take complete possession of them, wresting them from the grasp of holy purpose, and desecrating them with unworthy and ignoble energy. And for this preeminent reason we are enjoined to redeem the time.

No individual can hope to live in this world without his evil day perhaps many times repeated. Jacob at the court of Pharaoh referred to his days as few but also as evil; never could he forget the evil days that came to him in his own family, to mention none outside—in connection with Esau his brother, Laban his father-in-law, and his sons who had sold Joseph. Paul pictures the Christian warrior standing firm in the evil day of combat with error. Who does not know the pain of the evil day of sorrow when a loved one is snatched away by the hand of death; of disappointment when rosy hopes turn out to be faded and shattered petals; of reverses in business when the hardest efforts terminate in apparent failure; of depression in spirit when melancholy sinks its deadly beak in our souls; of temptation when the enticements to sin are so strong that human strength alone cannot resist; of waning spirituality with its unhappiness or of uncheckable trials with their burning tests.

The individual day in the individual life may be evil, but there is also a hint of the prevalence of evil in the world about us. The love of money makes the heart of man as hard as the metal he loves and is a root of all kinds of evil. Ambition burns out the graces and leads its de-

votee to almost any length of evil. Appetite for strong drink and ruinous drugs destroys manhood, home, and soul. Lust is an eating cancer, clutching at the vitals and revolting to the last degree. Scepticism paralyzes the highest powers and thwarts the noblest possibilities. Formality suffocates genuine piety and forestalls the exertion of a lofty spiritual influence. Oh, how much evil there is in the world which the light of each day must reveal!

The evil must be met, counteracted, overcome. We are commissioned to do the work. And we can do it by redeeming the time. Job had his evil day but he redeemed the time and the last scene pictures a greater prosperity and happiness than at first; Judas had his evil day, did not rightly use the time, and came to a terrible fate. Israel in the wilderness used the long years of waiting and so became prepared for entering the land flowing with milk and honey; but later they forgot as a nation to redeem the time and hence their dispersion over the earth and the passing of the sacred city into the hands of the Gentiles. The days are indeed evil; herein lies our strongest reason not for rejecting them but for redeeming them. Happy will we be and happy will the world be when this lesson is learned.

And now let us take with us these seven thoughts as the summary and application of what has been said in regard to our duty to time:

(1) Value it: as you value your happiness, your usefulness, your very soul.

(2) Rescue it: let no pirate capture it and no murderer kill it.

(3) Fructify it: put into it the germ of a high and holy purpose.

(4) Consecrate it: economize, energize, effectualize every day and hour.

(5) Transform it: the evil day is not an evil, if it be redeemed.

(6) Surrender it: to the past when the deed is done and to God when time is over.

(7) Supplement it: for it may be made the stepping-stone to a golden eternity.

And so may the Great Giver of time grant us also the wisdom to use it so that at the last we may lay it full of good deeds at the Master's feet and hear Him graciously say, "Well done!"

VIII

SAVED AS BY FIRE

If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.—First Corinthians 3 : 15

The picture in the Apostle's mind as he wrote these words was well illustrated in the city of Corinth where his readers lived. There were the stately temples, palaces, and other public buildings, resting upon adamantine foundations, their massive walls constructed of granite and marble, their columns and roofs glittering with decoration of silver and of gold. Within the same city and often hard by these structures were the huts of the poor and the profligate: set like mere coops upon the ground, the walls of board or of wooden laths with straw in the interstices, the roof composed of thatch. The contrast between the two was less on account of present architectural beauty and utility than in the matter of permanence. Which could better and longer stand and defy the ravages of hostile forces? Which, for example, could more effectually withstand a raging conflagration? There could be but one answer. Every one in Corinth remembered the awful fire which had occurred many years ago. In those greedy flames the houses of wood and straw were eagerly and completely devoured while their hot breath swept without avail against the walls of granite and marble. And so the searching fire with pencil of flame drew the line between the transitory and the permanent: on one side, smoking rubbish; on the other, unmolested and indestructible grandeur.

We are thus taught some awful lessons relative to the building up of a true life, both in character and in conduct. First of all, be sure on what you

build: not on slippery soil or shifting sand, but on Christ the Solid Rock. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Then upon this one secure basis of a truly successful life be sure as to **what you build.** There are two classes of material: on the one hand, gold, sliver, costly stone—the very best products of mind, heart, and soul; on the other hand, wood, hay, stubble—the mere froth and foam of life, entirely out of keeping with the foundation. Upon what is so infinitely precious we ought to lay the most precious we can command. And again, be sure that you **build in view of fire.** The structures we erect will be severely tested by a more searching flame than ever invaded the habitation of man. "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." The sane man will surely desire and seek to perform a work which will remain undestroyed before the revealing fire.

Yet when the great time of testing comes, the Apostle further tells us, some shall be rewarded and some shall suffer loss. As there were the two kinds of buildings within the one city of Corinth, so there are two classes of builders on the one foundation. In the first instance, the man is saved and his work rewarded; in the second instance, the man is saved but his work destroyed. The life-structure of the one stands the test and is praised; that of the other fails largely or entirely and is destroyed. Both builders themselves escape by the grace of God; and so the

vital difference between them lies in the result of the supreme test of their work under the discriminating hand of God in the final judgment.

The second of these characters furnishes the theme of our present consideration. The labors of his life are Christless and valueless; in the flame of testing he suffers loss in the burning of his work; but out of and through the flames consuming his work "he himself shall be saved." And so at the Judgment seat of Christ he hears upon him the inerrant verdict: "Burn the work. Save the worker!"

The Work Burned

It is not a little significant that the fuel of that ultimate flame is here described by the word "work." Then, it is not play, much as we spend upon trifles; it is not idleness, much of time and opportunity as we thus fritter away and neglect; it is not labor alone which through aimlessness or ignorance fails of result; for all of these. as every one knows and feels must be swept away. But it is work, labor that accomplishes something, that reaches its purpose, and leaves some traces of energy after the worker is gone. It is the best and most permanent of what man has done. Moreover, it is the work of a Christian. The Apostle is writing of Christians, primarily of teachers and preachers and so inclusive of all believers. He is indeed one whose real talent is little used if not altogether hidden, whose true light is flickering under the bushel, whose tree produces more foliage than fruit, whose life is not consecrated; but still he is a Christian, a genuine child of God, and doubtless the representative of many be-

lievers to-day. But notwithstanding it is work, and the work of a Christian, it is yet an earthly work: it employs the earthly part of the worker —muscle, mind, individuality, influence; uses earthly means, materials and methods; is limited to earthly objects and attainments. And since this is so, the work is worthless to the cause of Christ. There stands the fig-tree in the vineyard with every incentive to fruit-bearing—life, soil, culture, air, sunshine, shower; but we come to it and find nothing but leaves: does it fulfil its true mission? Yonder is the candle, several inches in length, already lighted, adapted to the candlestick, with light-giving power sufficient for a room-ful of people; but instead of flaming from the candlestick it is overcapped by the bushel measure or set underneath the curtained bed. Of what real value is its light? Alas, how many in the hive of humanity are drones, how many in the nation are but parasites on the body politic, how many in the churches are hardly worth the ink required to write their names upon the church register! Work indeed, but the work of balancing straws, of blowing bubbles, of chasing butterflies; the work of a good man but absolutely valueless to man, to the brotherhood, and to God.

But whatever the character of the work, it must and will be tested. Many of these tests are applied during our earthly existence. For one thing time itself is a test; an error may rise and reign for awhile, but wait—will it stand the test of time? A book appears, catches the popular mind and is the rage of the hour; will it survive a decade, or a twelve-month? Other tests are found

in the hard experiences of life which reveal the excellencies or the deficiencies in our work as the thundering locomotive tests the bridge over which it speeds or the beating surf tries the strength of the bowlder disputing the sovereignty of the sea. Yes, we have these and many other tests in this life; and before them how many fail! Wrecked before they reach open sea, fallen as trees in the path of the hurricane, devoured like grasshoppers in the sweeping prairie fires! And if through these trying scenes the fittest of our work survive it must come to the time of testing when the living spirit bids farewell to the body, that awful hour when our physical and spiritual partnership is dissolved by the hand of death and the surviving partner goes to the Court of the Universe for the settlement of its affairs. But the day of all days of testing will be the Judgment.

"That awful day will surely come
The appointed hour makes haste
When I must stand before my Judge
And pass the solemn test."

All the nations of all the ages will there be gathered. Upon each soul and the work of each life the divine search-light will be turned. From it no one can hide beneath over-hanging rocks or down-falling mountains. We have our daily and weekly and monthly examinations here when our knowledge and ignorance, our strength and weakness, are manifested; then we shall stand our final examination before the Judge of all the earth. God help us to stand it well!

It is intimated by the apostle, in figure if not in fact, that fire will be the great agency for the

testing of our character and work. That there shall be literal elemental fire in connection with the consummation of the age is repeatedly foretold. While we cannot speculate here, it does not seem likely that any man's work shall be actually subjected to the ordeal of physical flame. No, there is another fire of which that familiar to us is but a shadow, the glimmer of prophecy. Before it only the real and the genuine can stand, just as in Corinth the granite temple stood when the thatched hut was eaten up by the flames. Is it too much to say that on that great revealing day of the Lord the fire of testing will be the flame of the divine presence? Such a fire as that which in the burning bush caused the man of God to stand with bare head and feet unsandaled on holy ground; such a fire as that which in these same mountains of Sinai swept through the ravine in front of Elijah's cave and made the desert prophet cover his face with his mantle; such a fire as that which shone upon Saul at his conversion leaving him for days without sight; such a fire as the apocalyptic seer from his lonely isle saw flaming at the end of the age around the throne of judgment and of glory. It was before this veiled fire, you might say painted fire, in the person of the physical Christ that even Peter the loyal and devout apostle on one occasion winced as he cried: "Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" And if a good man, conscious of some wrong in himself and of absolute holiness in his Lord thus felt when both were in the flesh and were manifest friends, what must it be when our naked souls stand there at judgment known through and

through by Him who looks upon them, when the aggregate of our life-work is then thrust into the flame of final testing! Sometimes we tremble before the opinion of men, shrinking from the unfriendly eye, cowering before the expected lash of criticism; what shall it be when we come under that piercing Eye which will see to the center and scan the contents of our every soul! How quickly that flame will detect and devour the stubble and hay of our life, and how surely in its light may the really good be recognized and rewarded!

Yes, the wood and hay and stubble of life are to be finally devoured; they had a mission and a purpose, but it was only temporal and temporary, and he who places it upon the one foundation need not expect it to remain. Only the gold and silver and precious stone are to endure. The refiner's fire rids only of the dross; the pure metal abides. And so whatever we have done that is of value, that will stand. Mind you, it is not the man but his work that we are considering; and only that part of his work will be burned up which is not worth anything to the Master. It may be that some on that final day will stand the test as the Hebrews in the fiery furnace; but likely there will be many more whose work shall be destroyed; while many shall find that some of their work has been transitory and some of it permanent. But whatever the result, it will be decisive and final. There will be no rebuilding here. Never again will the foundation be presented for the superstructure of our lives. If we have built unwisely in manner or in material, we shall never have opportunity to rectify it. The soul may be saved forever, but the life is gone forever!

The Worker Saved

Yes, the worker is to be saved, for he is here represented as a real Christian. Examine his heart and you will find repentance—he has gotten off the shifting sand; and you will find faith—he has gotten on the Solid Rock. Examine his life and you will find at least a partial obedience; some good work he has done, however small, irregular, half-hearted. And so not because of works but through grace he will enter heaven. And when he reaches that radiant shore his enjoyment will be full, but his capacity will not be what it would have been. He comes to that limitless ocean of bliss for a thimbleful when he should have come for a barrelful; the ocean can fill one as readily as the other.

But the point here is that his salvation in heaven is hardly more than a bare escape from hell. We are reminded of the escape of Lot from the city of Sodom: thither he had gone in search of wealth; there he had won money and fame, built his home and reared his family, spent the strength of his manhood and the best years of his life; one day the divine decree goes forth that the wicked cities of the plain must be burnt; Lot is warned, he hesitates, his family falters, at last they are almost literally dragged out of the doomed city; and three of them hardly reach the safe slopes of the surrounding hills when the fires of justice fall upon the cities and utterly devour them. The home and earnings and work and friends of all these years shorn away with one stroke; yonder he lies himself penniless and his daughters motherless—the three barely outside

the circle of flame, their work swept away! "He himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire."

Nearer still we may come to the picture in the mind of the Apostle, and it has been duplicated many times over in our own day and land. Here is the builder of a home: his bride he has brought to their own roof-tree; together they have wrought for its embellishment and utility—floor and wall and ceiling and passage and piazza and lawn and premises; here their children have gathered about their knees; here they have entertained their friends; here their energies center and here their heart-strings are interwoven; beautiful home and thrice happy occupants. But one night when all was quiet without and all were slumbering within, wild coals burst into flame and began creeping, burglar-like, from room to room till the stifling smoke and lurid light and fervent flames rouse the sleeping family. From their beds to the windows, and they leap for their lives from under the falling roof and through the flying sparks. A bare escape; every member of the family saved, but that beautiful home reduced to an ash-heap! Such is the apostolic picture of the man who is "saved as by fire."

We are reminded, finally, that though he is saved he yet suffers loss. He loses, first of all and manifestly, all that he has done, all that he has accumulated, that is earthly and material. No matter at what pains he has been or how much wisdom he has shown or how much fame among his fellows his deeds have brought him, he loses them at last; he lies down and dies and his work vanishes like frost-crystals in the sunlight. Time and

opportunity and the highest usefulness, all that he could have been, all that he could have done, all lost, forever lost. Lost the development he ought to have experienced; lost the capacity for larger things. And in the day of reward for deeds done in the body, he misses much of the reward. The salvation is free, but the reward may be won; the first comes to us through divine grace, the other as the result of our fidelity. So the man who is "saved as by fire" has really labored in vain; his work is not abiding and must be burnt; he cannot be recognized fully as a good workman, a faithful servant, capacitated for larger responsibilities. And so he not only suffers loss as to this life, but also comes short of the largest and best in the life to come. And while no one can measure the grace that saves him despite the worthlessness of his work, who can estimate his loss?

Beloved, learn the lesson of this phrase and apply it instantly and insistently in your lives. The time of the final testing has not yet come. The sun is still shining upon you and perhaps—perhaps—the day is not far spent. It is high time to awake out of sleep, to cease dilly-dallying with transient trivialities, and to work on with fidelity the remainder of life's day.

The one foundation has been laid, even Jesus Christ, and we are builders thereupon. With what materials have we built, and are building? Gold or stubble: which in the past? Gold or stubble: which in the future?

The real test of our work is permanence. It may look well now, it may be superior to others around it, it may stir our souls with pride to con-

template it; but will it stand? When the great fire test comes consuming the wood, hay and stubble, revealing the gold, silver and precious stone —will it stand?

We can and should do permanent work. We can put our dollars where no flames can destroy them. Here are millions about us who will file past the Judgment throne to heaven or to hell; abundance of materials immortal upon which to work. And then this soul of ours—this immortal self, not farm, or house, or business, goes up to God; see that it is prepared! Do the work that is permanent. God is your Helper and you can leave memorials lasting as eternity.

Oh, let us not be content with a bare escape from the flames of woe when divine grace offers us "an abundant entrance" into the realms of bliss! Let us be faithful, faithful unto death, and we shall hear the Master say: "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

A word more. If some on the true foundation thus escape by fire, what becomes of those on a false foundation? "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Stand a moment by that awful precipice and as you shrink back, fly to the arms of Jesus who is mighty to save, consecrate your all to Him, live the permanent life here, and you shall live the infinitely happy life hereafter.

IX

UNTO SALVATION

Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.—Hebrews 9 : 28

Our Lord is spoken of as having performed a final work, as performing a continuous work, and to perform a consummating work. The first was wrought once for all at Calvary in far Judea; the second is now going on at the right hand of the Father; the last is to be effected in the day of Final Account. The divine accomplishment in the past was atonement; that of the present is intercession; that of the future will be judgment. So if Christ be reckoned as bridging the chasm separating man from God and earth from heaven, we must regard the cross as the tower on the time-shore and the judgment throne as the tower on the eternity-shore while the intervening distance is spanned by the unfailing mediation of the ever living and reigning Redeemer. Thus a sure highway is provided for us from the flesh and earth and time to the heaven of the happy and to the bosom of God.

The writer to the Hebrews deals largely with this intermediate work, the ministry of intercession, so beautifully typified in the Jewish priesthood. But the divine High Priest instead of making a sacrifice, Himself became the sacrifice; instead of appearing at stated periods, He appeared once for all; instead of entering into the holy places that are human, He has gone "into heaven itself, now to apepar in the presence of God for us"; and one day will lay aside His priestly attire to ascend the throne of judgment.

And so from the sublime viewpoint of the interceding Christ the sacred penman turns our

vision backward to the dying Son of God and forward to the triumphant Son of Man. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Here, then, we have the main lesson of our Lord's first coming and the sure promise of His second coming, the one laying the foundation and the other placing the capstone of the structure of our salvation.

The Meaning of the Cross.

In the year thirty of our era at Jerusalem in the Roman province of Judea Jesus of Nazareth was crucified. After six arraignments within about as many hours before both the Jewish and Roman authorities He was sentenced to immediate death by Governor Pilate at the instigation and insistence of the Jews. At 9 o'clock on that Friday morning in the early spring the sentence was carried out: Jesus was nailed, hands and feet, to a Roman cross and uplifted between two robbers. Six dreadful hours with their agony and taunt and darkness and earthquake and outcry and heart-break—and "he gave up the ghost." The dead body of the innocent Nazarene was taken down from the cross and ere the sun had set, was laid away in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

Is it not strange that the central cross on that occasion should be so magnified in its proportions and so potent in its influence? By that sign Constantine conquered. It was basic in the work of the Great Reformers in Italy, Germany, Great Britain, and America. And to-day it not only

dominates all Christendom, but is rapidly invading all heathendom. Led by a Unitarian hymnologist, millions the world over are taking up the song:

"In the cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time;
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime."

Yes, the cross is the focal point of all history and we are told how it came to be so. First of all, He who suffered on that cross was the Christ, both Son of Man and Son of God. His followers found Him the one altogether lovely. His enemies must perjure themselves in order to formulate a charge against Him. His judges searched His record and beheld in Him no guile. His executioner saw Him die and he declared: "Truly this man was the Son of God!" To Him gave all the prophets witness not only declaring that He would come but also showing how He must suffer. And His divine character and mission stand vindicated in the light of subsequent history. Greater than Moses of the Jews or Cæsar of the Romans or Napoleon of the French or Washington of the Americans was the Christ of the cross; greater in His character, greater in His suffering, and greater in His work, because He was the Christ of God.

Observe also that the cross was but the altar of offering: "Christ was offered." His death, therefore, was not merely an execution; it was also and especially a sacrifice. The cross was the way that man's hate devised to get rid of Him; but it was the way also in which divine love expressed itself. The far-seeing Baptist sounded on

the banks of the Jordan the key-note of Christ's mission: "Behold the Lamb of God!" Faintly was the offering typified upon Moriah in the long ago when Abraham bound Isaac, laid him upon the altar, and raised his knife to slay the child of promise. Father and son bowed before the divine will and each was ready to do his part. So the death of Christ was a voluntary offering. Hear again "the Golden-Text of the Bible" and know the love of the Father: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." And Paul reminds us that the offering was equally voluntary on the part of "our Saviour Jesus Christ who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

The offering of the Lamb of God was effected once for all. This indeed seems to be the point just here in the writer's mind. The olden altars had to be kept in constant repair, fresh fountains of atoning blood opened day after day, and an unending line of victims driven forward into the sacrificial fires. But that order is done away; the types are of no more service when the Antitype appears. Let the candles be put out when the great Sun begins to shine. By one act in one man sin entered the world; by one sacrifice in the God-man may sin be routed from the world. The one offering is sufficient also because of the present intercessory work of Christ; once He died and now He ever lives to intercede. Moreover, no other offering was, is, or will be necessary be-

cause of Christ's relation to every individual who is once to die and once to appear at judgment. Yea, there is the one sacrifice and it will never be repeated. Look for the divine Victim nowhere else. To no other cross will He be nailed, and in no other attitude will He appear as the world's Saviour. Once, once only, and once for all was the divine offering made.

Important as is our knowledge of the facts that it was the Son of God who was crucified, that His death was an offering, and that it was once for all, something of supreme interest yet remains: What was the purpose and the meaning of that offering? Read again the lines of the sacred writer: "Christ was once offered **to bear sins.**" Ah, here is the whole secret of that awful scene. Without it the offering would never have been at all; without it, that death would not have been an offering; without it, the Christ would never, could never, have gone to the cross. But when we discover in the dying Jesus the world's great Sin-bearer, we touch the subtlest chords of truth and wake a whole chorus of Scripture evangels. Hear Isaiah in his night watch in the olden time say of the Redeemer: "He bare the sin of many." And just as the light of the new dispensation was breaking we hear the strong voice shouting in the wilderness: "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!" It was around the first communion table that the Lord Himself when He passed to His disciples the poured-out wine declared: "This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." In His great resurrection chapter Paul can-

not lose sight of the cross, and so he stresses as the gospel fundamental "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." This was also the gospel of Peter who, at first fickle as a changing April sky, but at last as true to the cross as the needle to the Pole, wrote of the suffering Christ, "who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." And again he says: "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." The beloved disciple with true insight into the character and mission of his Master wrote in his closing days: "We know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin." There can be no mistake about it. In His death Jesus took upon Himself the guilt of man. Think of Him, the pure, the innocent, the divine, under that awful load! The least of His suffering was the crucifixion agony which with diabolical deliberation twisted the bars of the body till the imprisoned spirit was set free. Intenser far was the agony of loneliness on the part of God from whom He came and of hissing rejection on the part of man for whom He came. Yea, He who ruled in the highest heaven descended to the very pit, drank to its dregs the bitterest cup of sin's penalty, endured the desertion of God, the persecution of man, the hostility of demons—all that He might bear our sins. Incomparable sacrifice! Wonderful, matchless, inexhaustible love!

We are reminded, further, that "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of **many**." The sacrifice of Christ, then, does not include all men unconditionally. So when Paul says of God our

Saviour "who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth," and when Peter says of the long-suffering Lord "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance," we understand that it is not the divine decree but the divine desire that all men be saved. And when Paul writes Titus that "the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men," we understand that the grace of God bringeth to all men salvation in offer but not always in effect. Another verse from Paul happily combines the two ideas: " . . . . We trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe"; that is, the sacrifice of Christ is sufficient for the saving of all but it is efficient only in the saving of those who believe. Hence Jesus declared as to His own mission: "The Son of Man came . . . . . to give His life a ransom for many." And as to the ultimate ingathering of the saved He also predicted (Matt. 8:11): "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven." Paul contrasting Adam and Christ, says: "If through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." From these passages some have inferred that the many, the majority, will eventually be saved and that the lost will be no greater percentage of total humanity than the convicts are to the population of a civilized and righteous nation. However that may be, the number of the saved is described as **many**, not as **all**. And only

those who accept Christ can be classed with the many.

Oh, then, how supremely important that men should turn from their sins to their Saviour. Look upon the atoning cross, see in Him who hung there your Redeemer, consecrate yourself and your all to Him, and go forth as a flaming evangel of His glorious gospel. Who can or will refuse from his heart to join in the universal Christian chorus:

"In the cross, in the cross,
Be my glory ever,
Till my raptured soul shall find,
Rest beyond the river."

The Promise of Return.

There is yet another vision that claims our attention; it is the complement of that we have been considering. "Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation."

Mark the fact that He who came and once for all went to His cross will come again to ascend His throne. Among the most precious of our Lord's utterances, made on the eve of the betrayal and the crucifixion, are the words: "I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." And when, the cross bare and the sepulcher empty, the disciples had re-assembled around their risen Lord, how eagerly and regretfully their eyes followed Him upward from Olivet whence He ascended! But to the upward-gazing throng the two men in white apparel declared: "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into

heaven." In all the Pauline writings there is no picture more beautiful and no prophecy more vivid than that of the returning Lord who "Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God." And in the bosom of the believer there is no keener anticipation, no hope more blessed than that of "the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Jesus is coming again. He may come at any time; He will come sometime.

And when He comes again it will be "without sin"—apart from sin, above sin. When He came before no guile was found in Him but it was put upon Him; He did no sin and yet He bore all sin; He was guilty of no wrong and still He was charged with the guilt of all wrong, And see where it led Him! Into the flesh that fetters and rots; along a path of labor and obscurity; under the ridicule and slander of His people; up to a cross of suffering and shame; down into a grave of death and disgrace! But when He comes again, divinity will be unfettered and sin's bearer will be sin's conqueror. Hear the resounding trump and the heavenly shout; see the glorious King with His angelic retinue; feel the shock of His downcoming; and know that the Judge of all the earth is at hand! No sin in Him, no sin upon Him, no sin about Him; holy in character, infinite in perfection, glorious in appearance! Thus the Saviour of men from sin will come again "without sin."

Moreover, His appearance will be pre-eminently to those that look for Him. We are not to infer

that only the vigilant shall behold Him in that day, for we are told that every eye shall see Him, every tongue confess and every knee bow before Him. But to the expectant His appearance will be the fulfilment of hope, the realization of a heart-longing. When the bridegroom came the foolish virgins as well as the wise were there, but how much more did His appearance mean to the wise than to the foolish! When the door was shut the wise were safely within and the foolish were irrecoverably without. And when the Lord comes again both Paul and Nero will see Him, but that coming will mean infinitely less to the monarch than to the Apostle who languishing in the dungeon wrote: "There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." So the great difference will be not in the fact of His appearance but in its purpose. All shall see Him; but some, as the wrathful Judge, and others, as the loving Saviour.

And this leads, finally, to the great object of our Lord's Second Coming: "Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, without sin, **unto salvation.**" Yes, it is to finally and forever complete the salvation of His people. The salvation that comes to us in the flesh and in time is a salvation of soul, but not of body. Moreover, the soul here is in an atmosphere of sin, it is liable to contamination, its growth is hindered, its powers are not free to fulfil their highest mission. And when death releases the saved soul into the unseen spirit world, there is

consciousness, happiness, perfection, but not completion. This is not effected till the Lord comes again. By His first coming He averted the soul's death penalty; by His second coming He will overcome the body's death penalty. So in that final day the body shall be called out of its dust and the soul out of paradise, both reunited in absolute harmony and adapted to the ultimate heaven. Then there shall be complete freedom from the power of sin and the dominion of Satan, Then the saint, redeemed in every part, shall enter heaven with its infinite possibilities of development. Chief of all and inclusive of all, this final salvation means presence with the Lord Himself visibly and audibly and forever. Is not the very thought of that ultimate bliss over-mastering? If we can but bear the light of a taper now and here, what must it be to stand in that matchless effulgence, surpassing the light of cloudless noonday, dazzling away every trace of darkness from the city of God! If the glimpses we get of the heavenly mansions so stir our pulses to faster, wilder beats, what must it be when the body incorruptible enters the everlasting habitations! Oh, fear not, then, the lightning-bolt blasting out a highway for His descent. For His coming will be "unto salvation."

"For Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation."

X

AS THE WATERS COVER THE SEA

The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.—Isaiah 11 : 9

In sublimity of thought, in darkness of environment, and in radiance of outlook the prophecies and the ministry of Isaiah are without a parallel. For lofty ideas and beautiful diction, for point and strength and force, these pages are unsurpassed in all the field of human literature. And yet this man of grand powers and great soul lived and wrought and wept and went down in the gathering shadows which brought on the long night of Israel's captivity. Four of the five kings of Judah under whom he prophesied were bad men. The whole nation from monarch to shepherd boy was sinking. The prophet saw it, raised his voice and threw his strength against it, but all without lasting avail. He saw the Assyrian heel crush the northern kingdom and neighboring powers. He felt the structure of Judah's independence tottering to its fate. And though his nature was mild and tender, yet his ministry must be one of reproof and warning; his work was not to be like the dew, as he would have preferred, but like the thunderstorm. But his people would not in the mass be benefited; they followed criticism with persecution; and finally, if tradition be correct, this sublimest of the prophets met a most terrible martyrdom, being sawn asunder in a hollow tree by order of Manasseh.

And yet despite the darkness surrounding and impending, personally and politically, this great man looked onward to a better day. The sky seemed completely overcast with cloud, dark and impenetrable, but his eyes detected a pool of the

blue heaven above. Yonder on the horizon, far across these weary wastes of desert, he could see a patch of green, an oasis with palms and fountains for future generations. The thick darkness of the present was relieved by the faint glimmer of a dawn which he should himself never see. No pessimist was he, though the complexion of his ministry seemed to warrant the charge; he was the optimist of optimists. With all his soul he believed that the best is yet to be. The coming day should be infinitely brighter than the waning day. Better than the past with an Eden sparkling on its brow; better than the by-gone with Abraham and Moses and David and Solomon; better than what is or has been shall be.

Yes, the best is yet to be. And in these words the prophet tells us the best of the best: "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Here is the gold of the golden age. At last the rainbow of hope is stationary and we can grasp the treasure at its base or mount up its glorious arch. What greater riches in all the wide universe through all the eternities than "the knowledge of the Lord"? And what brighter consummation awaits the earth than that this knowledge shall oversweep and envelop it "as the waters cover the sea"?

Here then we have the prophet's up-look to Jehovah, the center, source, and subject of highest knowledge; and then his outlook upon the earth filled, interpenetrated, dominated, uplifted by this supreme knowledge out of its long night into the perpetual day.

The Knowledge of the Lord.

No one could have felt more keenly than our prophet the widespread and lamentable ignorance regarding the Lord. Had He not with a strong hand led them out of Egypt, through the wilderness, into Canaan? Was not all their glory bestowed by Him, their every deliverance the interposition of His hand? Yet they had forgotten; they were unthinking and ignorant. So to-day the Lord is half known, misknown, unknown.

Is it not strange that the Maker of worlds, Author of life, Giver of every good, should be unknown? And yet this is vastly true among intelligent and illiterate in lands professedly Christian and avowedly heathen. It was not among barbarians but among Athenians that the altar stood with the inscription, "To the Unknown God." They had their Athene and Zeus and a hundred other deities; they erected altars to all national deities so that no stranger in their streets need worship a strange god; yet Jehovah above all was unknown! Look about you and abroad at this good hour: uncounted millions, ignorant of the Most High, bowing by a tree that could be uprooted by a storm or before an idol that can be carried in the pocket! And in our own land ablaze with Christian civilization see the masses follow the arteries of traffic and crowd our great thoroughfares—multitudes bowing as devotedly as the ancients to Mammon and Mars and Venus and Bacchus and all the long list of strange gods. Alas, alas, that the Lord of lords should be unknown!

And it is almost as bad that He should be misknown. Did not Saul of Tarsus think he was doing God a service when he was persecuting saints with all his power even to distant cities? With all his theological knowledge and the sincerity of his nature, he was mistaken about the divine character and unfilled with divine knowledge; hence his fearful record as high-handed persecutor of believers. You remember also that when on turbulent Gennesareth the disciples with their oars were battling with the storm Jesus came walking on the water, they did not recognize Him and so were affrighted as by an apparition. How much of agitation we would save ourselves and how many mistakes we could evade if only we had true knowledge of the Lord! It is sad indeed that the Lord is so often misknown.

A step higher, but still far below the desired summit, and we find the Lord half known. Some of His character, some of His dealings, some of His commands grasped in part; but even that knowledge, limited as it is, is yet more extensive than intensive. The disciples walked with the risen Lord on the way to Emmaus, invited Him to partake of their hospitality, and took their seats for the evening meal without recognizing Him; surely they thought they knew their Master, but it was only a half knowledge. And so in the case of Thomas, one of the Twelve, doubter of his brethren's word and of his Saviour's power; not until within sealed doors the Lord Himself appeared with nail prints and living voice did Thomas really know Him and cry, "My Lord and my God!" Oh, that the half-knowing, the mis-

knowing, and the unknowing could rise out of their ignorance to a full knowledge of the truth and of God!

And it is just this which is contemplated by the prophet here in his prediction of "the knowledge of the Lord." In its most elementary form this knowledge of the Lord is a **knowing about the Lord.** Not only the fact of His existence and His name; but also His works and His character. If we revel in the pages of history with its long line of heroes and heroines, if we search the annals of State and Nation and glory in the good and great who have appeared among us, much more should we know of Him who is infinitely higher and greater and holier than all. We can but appreciate the sentiment of the poor heathen who, after hearing the Gospel, said to the missionary: "Why did you not come before?" Why, indeed, should any be left without knowledge of God in this world of ours so bound together by electric wires and fettered by bands of commerce on sea and land? Let the divine Name fly round the sphere; let the divine Book lie open upon the altar of every home; let all men know that God is and that He is God!

Again, this "knowledge of the Lord" means not merely knowing about the Lord, but **knowing the Lord Himself.** He is not only above men, but with them; He is universal monarch indeed, but He is everybody's friend. Too few in all the past have risen to the level of this intimate knowledge of Jehovah, but those few have been star figures in the history of the good. There was Enoch the great ante-diluvian who walked with God; Abra-

ham the man of faith and the friend of God; Moses who talked with God amid Sinai's fire; David who reigned as the man after God's own heart; Elijah who heard the still small voice; Daniel who kept his window open toward Jerusalem; John who lay on the bosom of his Lord; Paul who yielded his stubborn will to Jesus outside the gates of Damascus. Think of a time when all men shall thus know the Lord—lifted from wallowing in the mire of carnal society to serene companionship with the God of heaven and earth! Not that man can ever know God fully, for only God can comprehend God; we need not breathe all the atmosphere in order to live, and so our knowledge of God need not be infinite and absolute in order to fill out the prophet's ideal. But universal man is to know God as friend knows friend, only more clearly, more unselfishly, more perfectly; to not only recognize Him but to recognize Him with love as the Giver of every blessing that comes, with faith as Saviour from all sin, with obedience as the Lord of our lives exalting and purifying them, with hope as ultimate visible associate in eternity to come. How much better it is to **know** than to **know about**! We younger men know about Robert E. Lee as one of the brightest figures of our Southern history, of universal history; but we have never personally known that great chieftan—never felt the magnetic touch of his hand, the flash of his eye, the charm of his voice, the thrill of his living personality. And if contact with the great of earth so stir and stimulate, to what height may we not be borne by loving and perpetual acquaintance with Jehovah the infinite! To this altitude

is to rise not only a man now and then, but universal man in the glorious after-awhile.

Once more: "The knowledge of the Lord" means **having the knowledge of the Lord,** knowing the Lord's knowledge. This follows knowing the Lord Himself. Through all of these stages the disciples of Jesus passed: first they, through the testimony of John and others, knew about the Lord; then by loving association for years they knew the Lord; and so they came into possession of the Lord's knowledge. What was the great need of Israel when they had gone forth from the banks of the Nile? "The knowledge of the Lord." And not until the man of God had received it from the hands of God, given it to the elders of Israel, and penned it for future generations could the tribes hope to erect a national edifice. What the world needs is the truth of God; needs it more than all the wealth of the mines, the fruit of the field, or the proverbial cattle on a thousand hills. The truth as it is in the Book of revelation—let the theologian expound it; the truth as it is in the book of Nature—let the scientist explore and declare it. Let the lover of wisdom as he wanders through the mazes of philosophic thought repeat the sentiment of Kepler: "I think Thy thoughts after Thee, O God!" Or like Agassiz with his students on a field tour who said: "Gentlemen, before we study these rocks, let us pray to the God who made them." Or like Tennyson who as he wrote his sublime strains lifted heart and voice in the frequent prayer: "O, Thou Infinite! Amen!" Ah, those who have brought us the richest nuggets of truth have simply come

with occasional dust-grains from the immeasurable continent of divine knowledge. What must it be when this knowledge is all-pervasive?

Surely this is the highest knowledge. If to know man with all his complexities and possibilities, with his sympathy and stimulus, is more than to know the infinitesimal amoeba, the knowledge of God is absolutely without a rival and unapproachable. It brings within finite compass a fragment of the infinite; it gives the transient a hold on the eternal. And certainly it is the most useful knowledge; we can do more with it than with anything else. In fact, it is the key to all knowledge; all else is a peep in at the window—this alone flings open the door. The savage knows that the fire of the storm-cloud will strike down a forest monarch; an Edison knows that the same force can drive onward the wheels of civilization. The one is a picture of knowledge solitary; the other of knowledge applied, useful, connected with the divine. And then such a knowledge is transforming; it is more than changing a ragged rustic into a philosopher or statesman. Such a change was wrought in Saul, possibly a graduate of the University of Tarsus, and certainly of Gamaliel's seminary at Jerusalem. He knew of God, but he knew not God; here he met Jesus in light out-dazzling the noon-day, and this knowledge of the Lord fired his heart to a holy evangelism that made him the benefactor of every age. Wonderful knowledge, the highest, the most useful, transforming, uplifting—"the knowledge of the Lord."

The Filling of the Earth.

No brighter future for the earth could the pen of even Isaiah predict than that the knowledge of the Lord should be world-embracing. And see the beautiful figure in which he conveys its universality: "As the waters cover the sea."

Mark, first of all, a **hidden deficiency**! Have you ever thought while afloat upon the heaving bosom of old ocean of what a world lies beneath its waves? Suppose all of its waters were withdrawn and the sea-basin wiped dry: leagues of sand, peaks of jagged rock, cavernous depths, unrelieved stretches of barren mountain and valley, —a vast and veritable Sahara! If as Dr. Van Dyke says in his charming "Little Rivers" a dry river-bed is a scar upon the face of Nature, what would the dry ocean-bed be? As the great waters rise and surge far above the sea-basin, so the knowledge of the Lord shall over-sweep and hide from sight in that future day all the imperfections and corruption and wickedness of the earth.

Moreover, the sea-waters impress with their **grand sufficiency**: enough in quantity to fill up the deepest fissures of the earth, to chase the fiords far inland, to hold in its grasp three-quarters of the world; immeasurable force hurled ceaselessly and remorselessly upon every inch of shore-line; on whose bosom our mightiest merchant marine is but a chaff-petal, our greatest steamship lines like a spider's thread over a rivulet, our most deathful naval battles merely the tussle of microscopic insects. How great is the ocean and what a glorious picture of the grand sufficiency of the knowledge of the Lord!

And finally sparkling as a gem on the bosom of the great deep we note a **sublime efficiency.** It is not merely to look at, beautiful and grand as it is; within and upon and about its waters a multitudinous life is generated and maintained. A vast store-house for man, the great highway of commerce and travel, the principal theater of courage and ambition, regulator of climate and mother of rain-clouds; truly the sea is a benefactor and all men are its beneficiaries. And how beautifully we have set forth the inexhaustible beneficence of the all-pervasive knowledge of the Lord!

Then let every sight or thought of the ocean remind us that the knowledge of Jehovah shall fill the whole wide world as full as the sea-basin is of the sea.

So at last the world will roll forward into that future and final glory. It will be, in part, the glory of universal enlightenment. Not that all men shall know all things—far from it; but that all in the earth redeemed shall have that knowledge most worth having and that which ultimately insures and includes all other, the knowledge of Jehovah. Then at last the long, fierce battle with Ignorance will be over; every one shall be registered as a student in the University of the Most High. Enlightenment divine and enlightenment universal! Moreover, a part of that future radiance will be the glory of universal peace. No longer will blood and treasure be poured out like water upon the altar of Mars. Swords shall be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks. "The war-drum shall throb no longer." Battleships and forts and army posts shall be de-

serted; all the enginery of war shall rust with disuse. All men shall see eye to eye; no discord, no conflict, no bitter strife. A brotherhood universal; a very kingdom of love; the Prince of Peace enthroned and regnant throughout the earth. And again, there and then will be the glory of universal righteousness. Then love shall fulfil all the law and every one will square his life by the Golden Rule. No need for judge and jury; there will be no differences to settle. No need for jails and penitentiaries; there will be no criminals to incarcerate. No need for houses of correction or hospitals for the insane; all shall walk the path of uprightness, all with their powers unclouded, all in full mental and moral health. Now we lightly say that righteousness resides only in the "Amen Corner"; then it shall be a world-wide heritage. To-day we think those alone are right who can utter the shibboleth of our creed and party; then the great waves of goodness will hide small things in their magnificent sweep. Then men shall do right from love of right, hate wrong because it is wrong, and finally appear faultless in the divine presence with exceeding joy.

O friend, to-day look up out of your darkness at the sky. Behold the effulgence blazing yonder on the horizon. It is not sunset locking up the dead day in its sepulcher nor evening star prophet of coming darkness; it is day-break, it is sunrise, conqueror of the long night, forerunner of the endless day. Yes—

"The morning light is breaking
The darkness disappears;
The sons of earth are waking
To penitential tears."

Loud rings in our ears the call to action. "Awake thou that sleepest!" Is not the longed-for day soon to burst upon us—the brightest day earth ever knew or can know? Arise and welcome his healing beams! Work and pray and watch and wait. Send forth the good tidings till every ear has heard and every heart has felt and every life has been thrilled. Give of your means that you may give the Gospel to every creature. Parents, surrender your children to the evangelization of the earth as Abraham laid upon Moriah's altar the child of promise. Young men, young women, lose your lives in the winning of disciples among the nations and you shall find them again in the larger life hereafter. Let everything that hath breath and life contribute to the salvation of the world and the bringing in of the Golden Age that is sure to come.

"Waft, waft ye winds the story,
And you, ye waters, roll,
Till like a sea of glory
It spreads from pole to pole."

"For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

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